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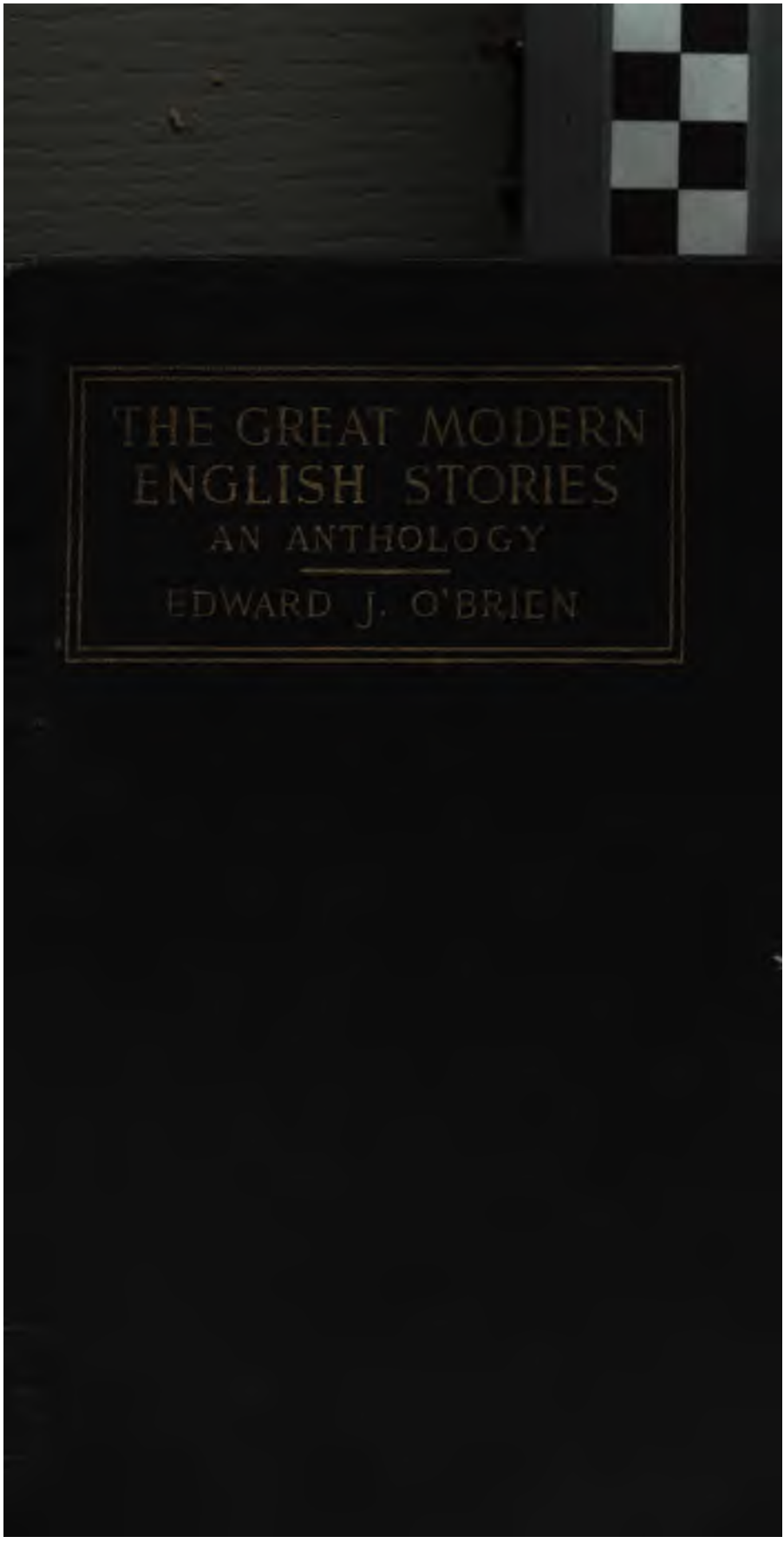
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THE GREAT MODERN
ENGLISH STORIES
AN ANTHOLOGY
EDWARD J. O'BRIEN


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THE GREAT MODERN
STORIES SERIES

THE GREAT MODERN ENGLISH STORIES

AN ANTHOLOGY

COMPILED AND EDITED
WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY

EDWARD J. O'BRIEN



NEW YORK
BONI AND LIGHT



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INTRODUCTION

While it is true that the short story as a literary form is almost the youngest child of the writing art, it is interesting to realise that the germ of the modern short story may be found in the earliest literatures, and that the human craving for an interesting short tale is as old as the history of the race. The short story, as we know it to-day, is a highly developed and most sophisticated form, but its tradition extends backward through many literatures to old Eastern tales. Even in English literature, it is hardly stretching a point to claim that Chaucer was the first great English short story writer, and if we examine the English literary heritage, going backward from century to century, we shall see that the tradition of tale telling is, on the whole, continuous, though for the most part the tale is told for its own sake, and not for the sake of characterisation or the dramatic presentation of forces in conflict.

But the modern short story in its more rudimentary form does not extend much further back in English literature than Defoe, and as such it is more or less the contemporary of the English novel. Defoe's narrative of the *Strange Apparition to Mrs. Veal* is probably the first conscious effort to write a modern short story in English. And for some time to come it was the last. There were brief narratives and allegories to be sure, such as Addison's *Vision of Mirzah*, which approaches the short story form more nearly than that of the essay, and there were occasional episodes in novels, which had a narrative unity and could be detached without injury from their setting, such as *The Tale of the Old Man of the Hill* in Fielding's *Tom Jones*. But these were only short stories by accident, and it does not seem to have occurred to English writers of fiction that the short

story was a literary form susceptible of elaborate development until nearly a century had passed.

Its discovery as a popular literary form probably dates from the beginnings of the Scottish literary circle. We find the short story already shaping itself into absorbing narrative with Scott, Hogg, and many of the writers for *Blackwood's Magazine,* and the tradition these men inaugurated lingered on well into the nineteenth century as an important aspect of Scottish letters, notably in such a masterpiece as *Rab and His Friends* by Dr. John Brown. Scott was mindful of Fielding, and his best short story, *Wandering Willie's Tale,* as most readers will recall, was introduced as an episode into a long novel, as a resting point for the reader's attention.

Thackeray also introduced a short story which satisfies all the essential requirements of the literary form in *Barry Lyndon,* while Dickens, whose incessant and delighted curiosity about the human race created countless characters, found that many of them could be presented most directly and happily in short narratives, which became more and more like the modern short story that we know.

There was an intermediate period of competent work by many lesser men, but not much can be said for its permanent literary quality. The development of the short story had passed into the hands of craftsmen in other countries. Poe and de Maupassant in America and France had fixed its form, and they were the true pioneers who eventually shaped the main outlines of the English and American short story as we find it to-day. But their influence was not sharply felt at first in England, and the decay of the English short story was comparable in kind, if not in degree, with the decay of the English drama during the same period.

Three Englishmen may fairly claim to have rescued it from its parlous state. All three were novelists first, and short story writers only in a secondary sense from their point of view, but each contributed something dynamic to the art, and it is with the period which they represented so adequately, that I have thought it best to begin this col-

lection of stories. The earlier stories can readily be found in many collections, and are for the most part extremely well known. My object here is to present an adequate cross-section of the best work that has been done since George Meredith, Thomas Hardy, and Robert Louis Stevenson inaugurated the present era in the English short story.

George Meredith's five short stories are each as long as the average novelette, and accordingly he is not represented in this collection, but they have the unity of the true short story, and in them there is a keen preoccupation with the subtleties of characterisation which was hitherto uncommon in the English, as opposed to the American, short story. I suppose his masterpiece in this genre is *The Tale of Chloe,* a delicately woven study of place, idyllic in its portraiture, whose outward frailty conceals vigorous delineation and a poignancy deftly rendered by suggestion.

Thomas Hardy brought to the short story a tragic irony in sharp contrast to the comic irony of Meredith. His method is relentless, and by economy of background, with spare strokes and broad outlines, he conveys a pressing sense of destiny brooding over man and his works and guiding them into inevitable courses. The best of his short stories are to be found in *Wessex Tales* and *A Group of Noble Dames,* and I have chosen as typically representative of his excellences *The Three Strangers,* the story which in my opinion is destined to live longest by reason of its classical structure, vivid contrasts, complete realisation of background, and sharp dramatic portraiture.

Robert Louis Stevenson brought romance back to the short story, and reminded English writers that a good story was worth telling purely for its own sake. He gave the English short story buoyancy and glad directness, seeking and finding the essential magic of words and pictures. These qualities are well illustrated in *A Lodging for the Night,* in which the essence of a period is captured and rendered in fine nervous rhythms. He was not preoccupied with theses, and was content to stand or fall as a story-teller, but his preoccupation with style was unceasing, and he cared enough about style to adjust his medium unfalter-

ingly to the substance which it was to shadow, while always avoiding preciosity.

Meredith, Hardy, and Stevenson, therefore, revived the literary tradition of the short story, and at the same time they humanised it. It is true, of course, that many of the men who followed them used it as a tapestry on which to embroider stiff patterns, and the English *fin de siècle* movement offers many examples of what they accomplished in this way with careful craftsmanship and discreet elimination of all human elements. But we are scarcely concerned with these men here. They are interesting to the student of literature and of literary forms, but they did not affect permanently the course of the short story art.

Three men who were notably representative of their age have left more or less enduring short stories behind them, and they are represented in this collection. Oscar Wilde in the best of his fairy tales attained a conscious simplicity which is based upon very subtle and sophisticated conventions. I have chosen *The Star-Child* as an adequate example of this patterned and exquisite prose. Swinburne and Morris, among others, had written stories in the same tradition, but I consider Wilde the more representative, inasmuch as in his stories two periods meet faultlessly in a moment of perfect transition. Ernest Dowson and Frederick Wedmore are less known as story-tellers, but quite as significant, not only because of their influence, but on account of the very individual quality of their work. While it is true that these men are typical embodiments of the spirit of their time, each had a personal vision, each developed an individual style, and each handed on a tradition of form which has not been lost upon later men. Dowson's mood was one of meticulous introspection, and life as he sees it is reflected through the lens of an individual temperament with much aloofness and natural æsthetic fastidiousness. In reading *The Dying of Francis Donne*, which I have chosen because it focuses better than his other stories his special vision of life, you will observe that it is essentially the work of a bookish man who loved old English prose, but whose craving for sensations engendered a unique

hyperæsthesia. This story is a remarkable contribution to the literature of sensibility, and pulses with a rhythm which follows with great precision the slightest nervous channel of his thought.

Wedmore also was careful to find the *mot juste*, but his fabric is most often less pliable than that of Dowson, and perhaps the one story from his pen which will live in English literature is his delicate idyl *To Nancy*, which I have reprinted for its studied simplicity. Few stories have rendered more poignantly a common emotion, while preserving such reticence. The form which Wedmore adopts is one of the most difficult short story forms to handle, yet there is an ease and clarity about his portrait which is genuinely memorable. There were other men and women at this time whose work was notable, though less representative. Such were Hubert Crackanthorpe, whose untimely end put a sudden termination to a most promising talent, and George Egerton, represented here with some adequacy by *An Empty Frame*. I believe that a new edition of Hubert Crackanthorpe would be a fine public service, but his particular medium sets him apart somewhat from the scope of the present collection.

So far the English short story was a vehicle for literary craftsmen whose chief medium was the novel or poetry, but not quite thirty years ago a young man came out of India who was destined not only to revolutionize the form of the short story, but to make it one of the most popular forms of literary expression. Rudyard Kipling had been contributing short sketches of Indian life to obscure Indian newspapers for some years before his work appeared in England, and many of these sketches had been gathered into small volumes published locally. When they were first reprinted in England, Mr. Kipling found himself famous over night. Since the days of Byron, no English writer had achieved such instantaneous success. It was immediately recognised that a great new force had appeared in English letters. Work such as this followed no tradition, but its sheer vitality and brutal strength imposed itself upon the public, and these Indian stories will always stand as the finest achieve-

ment of English short story-telling. They brought back to England a sense of alien strangeness, of great unknown forces pulsating with a life of their own. They had colour, terseness, and an acid portraiture hitherto unknown, yet they were warm with familiar human qualities, and they were the voice of a people in whom Mr. Kipling's readers found their own tradition portrayed. In the years which have followed these first English collections of his stories, an extraordinary change has taken place in the quality of the man's work. Year by year his technique conquered new territories and led his audiences with him, until at present no student of the short story can find a better model, but with this technical development the old vitality slowly diminished. Form has supplanted substance, and in this struggle of forces the artist has conquered the human genius of the man.

The short story had now come to stay, and a countless number of more or less capably endowed writers followed Mr. Kipling's literary example, with varying degrees of success. This period of expansion was coincident in development with the founding of many new magazines, and these magazines tended more and more to devote themselves to fiction. The American magazine, as we know it to-day, has also developed during the same period, and it was more and more from American audiences that the short story writer gained recognition and encouragement. At this point the number of competent short story writers becomes so great that little more can be attempted here than an indication of the main channels of expression into which the new movement flowed, and the factors which influenced its development into the literary form as it is practised to-day.

Coincident with the rise of Kipling was the growth of a school of sentiment led by J. M. Barrie, whose *Window in Thrums* and *Auld Licht Idylls*, to mention no other books, won wide recognition for their delicate fancy and poignant fidelity to experience. Reading them to-day, they show traces of impermanence. The page is a little faded, but the human emotion still rings true for the most part, and Barrie's sureness of touch kept pace with his own development.

In contrast to his idealisation we also had the grey realism of Gissing, who was primarily a novelist, but whose shorter studies are faithful pictures of the life he knew, though seen through the lens of an unhappy temperament; and the sharply etched little pictures of Arthur Morrison, whose *Tales of Mean Streets* is one of the minor classics of the English short story.

In sharp contrast to the work of Kipling and that of the young realists was the poetic vision of the sea and its sailors brought home to England by a young Pole who had sailed on many seas in English ships, and found himself the adopted son of an alien country whose welcome made England home. For the best part of a generation, Joseph Conrad has woven his wonderful tapestry of mystery and smouldering flame in many novels and short stories, proving his right to a place in the great English line by sympathetic inheritance. His work has that quality of strangeness in beauty found in the finest poetry, and his projection of the human mind and heart into distant outlands isolates what is significant in man's soul from the temporary and shifting patterns of cities and settled civilisations. His imagination is essentially a lonely one, though his sympathy with the human pageant is none the less keen and beautiful. Such men as Conrad and Synge who drift across the modern civilisations with eyes looking inward and contemplating spiritual embers have been the best interpreters of their time, and though Conrad was late in dining at life's banquet, the experience which he has to share with us is the richer on that account.

The literary artificers were meanwhile maintaining their own short story tradition. I do not think that the reader will soon forget the faultless art of Maurice Hewlett in his best short stories, in which he recreates with studied fastidiousness vanished periods of romance, or pictures with sympathy the Italy which he loves. Such stories as *Quattrocentisteria* and *The Madonna of the Peach-tree* are masterpieces of their kind. But Mr. Hewlett's range is a narrow one and has not founded a tradition of its own.

Almost contemporary with Conrad and Hewlett are the

very different talents of John Galsworthy and H. G. Wells. The quality which makes Mr. Galsworthy's stories noteworthy is their mellow flavour of an assimilated past. They are quintessential England with all the refinements of slow centuries of growth and decay, its richness of inheritance and studied art of existence, its feeling for tradition and love of familiar things and homely human ways. It is an aristocratic art, and depends on many subtle little valuations, recognising the value of choice and careful decisions in daily life, and the embodiment of a very definite ideal. But linked to this is Mr. Galsworthy's passion for social justice, and a feeling of identification with the humble akin to Dostoievsky. He is the most charitable of English story tellers.

H. G. Wells also has a passion for social justice, but it is an intellectual passion indulged for its own sake, and essentially a passion for ideas. You will find it reflected in most of the novels in his later manner, but as a short story writer he reflects a quite different aspect of his mind. The best of his stories are wild intuitive flights into the unknown, often anticipating science by the daring candour of their resolution, and pervaded with a freakish and quite infectious humour. Often they represent excursions into other planets or conditions of existence, but their verisimilitude is invariably perfect, and the worlds of fancy which Mr. Wells has created impress the reader as very liveable places. Mr. Wells is usually more preoccupied with dynamic forces than with subtle personalities, but there is a wistful poetry of human realisation about certain of his stories, which makes us regret that his preoccupation with other themes has diverted him from imaginative as distinguished from fanciful or critical work.

Of the craftsmen who continued in the last years of the nineteenth century and the early years of the present century the tradition of story telling inaugurated by Robert Louis Stevenson, Sir Arthur T. Quiller-Couch ("Q") has achieved the most distinguished work. Cornwall is his native heath, but any adventure will find him ready as a boon companion, and the long series of tales and short

stories which he has given us during the past quarter of a century always have a keen tang of life about them.

A younger tradition, but one which bids fair to become one of the most vital, is to be found in the poetic animism of Henry W. Nevinson, Algernon Blackwood, and W. H. Hudson. No one of these men is primarily a short story writer. Mr. Nevinson's stories are interludes in the life of a busy publicist and war correspondent, and are not widely known. But I believe that they will eventually find their public. They have a quality of romantic nostalgia, in their return to the old lost Greek life of the spirit, to which the modern mind tends more and more to respond, and I think that they recapture much of the forgotten fragrance of the Hellenic feeling for nature with its essential severity of classical form.

Algernon Blackwood also reflects the nostalgic regret for the gods that have passed, but with a more presently vivid realisation of their continued existence in the hearts of their few remaining worshippers, and phrases it more perfectly than any other contemporary, save possibly the fine poet who contents herself with the signature of "H. D." Blackwood's love for the vanished earth-life and the Mighty Mother has been expressed in many books with unflagging art, and his reading of earth always rings true. Few men have endowed nature with a more human personality, or been able to project their dreams and desires so successfully into channels of self-expression as this serene Pagan bereft of literary followers.

W. H. Hudson has been equally responsive to the great earth life, and his classic style with its rare colouring and flexibility probably ensures him a final permanence in his best work which is denied to Nevinson and Blackwood. His short stories are few in number, but unforgettable. The moral pointed by the work of these three fine artists is the possibility of fulfilment offered by complete surrender to the priesthood of beauty, and their preoccupation with the vision they have seen has produced a fine literary flowering.

It is difficult to classify the work of R. B. Cunninghame Graham. He has been a soldier of fortune in many fields

and many lands, and has assimilated many rich impressions of men and places. His imagination is essentially pictorial, and his selective art, though its range is narrow, has portrayed many of the pictures he has seen with finished ease. The short sketches which he has gathered into many volumes, still very little known in America, are often essays and pen portraits rather than short stories, but there is a single quality of vision in them all which reflects the art of a short story artist. He is the master of a fine modulated prose, rather severely patterned, which harks back rhythmically to the older traditions of English speech, but his outlook is essentially modern.

Of the late Richard Middleton, we may say that his special short story talent has little affinity to any of his contemporaries, but there is a quality of style in his prose which often suggests that of Cunninghame Graham, and accordingly I group them together. He has a wistful irony, however, which is all his own, and I think Stevenson would have enjoyed immensely the special quality of his humour. He has an impish way of bringing beautiful dreamlands into a remarkably close and paradoxical foreground, while maintaining their subdued light and mystery.

When we come to the younger short story writers of England, who are in the full flower of their talent, criticism seems invidious, and selection more so. But I have endeavoured to have my selection reflect something more than a personal preference, and the writers represented in this anthology include, I think, a fair cross section of the best that is now being done. The fine regional stories of John Trevena, redolent of the soil and its folk, the work of a minor English master, who achieved one great book in *Furze the Cruel*, and who is most undeservedly overshadowed by the inferior work of that other Dartmoor storyteller of talent, Mr. Eden Phillpotts; the colourful poetry of Thomas Burke's studies of Limehouse nights in London, with their plangent Chinese rhythms; the all too rare imaginative fantasies of Hugh Walpole; the delicate studies in adolescence of Roland Pertwee, which have something of Meredith's poetic quality; the naked struggle of primitive forces in

Grant Watson's Australian stories; the subconscious dream-quality of J. D. Beresford's studies in place; Hugh de Selincourt's background of clean winds and golden airs in that remarkable book, *Nine Tales;* D. H. Lawrence's sophisticated pageantry of heat and colour and stripped passion; Gilbert Cannan's stark renderings of provincial life with his eye on the object; and the work of many another artist come to mind. But I think that the short story writer of most promise among them all, repellent as his themes for the most part are, is Caradoc Evans, whose Biblical studies of life among the peasantry of West Wales have an authority of personal life and inevitable rhythmic style which is altogether memorable.

It would be a rash critic who would indulge in prophecy. This is the Elizabethan age of the English and American short story, and as you will see, I have left the Irish short story entirely out of account. To these young writers, one and all, life is eager with its sense of discovery. They are pressing forward into new uncharted continents every day, and the future is still an undiscovered country. It is a land where a wise critic will fear to tread, and so I draw aside the curtain and pass out, my prologue spoken, leaving you to criticise the play.

EDWARD J. O'BRIEN.

London,
January 31, 1919.



THE GREAT MODERN ENGLISH STORIES

THE THREE STRANGERS[1]

By Thomas Hardy

AMONG the few features of agricultural England which retain an appearance but little modified by the lapse of centuries, may be reckoned the high, grassy, and furzy downs, coombs, or ewe-leases, as they are indifferently called, that fill a large area of certain counties in the south and south-west. If any mark of human occupation is met with hereon it usually takes the form of the solitary cottage of some shepherd.

Fifty years ago such a lonely cottage stood on such a down, and may possibly be standing there now. In spite of its loneliness, however, the spot, by actual measurement, was not more than five miles from a county town. Yet, what of that? Five miles of irregular upland, during the long inimical seasons, with their sleets, snows, rains, and mists, afford withdrawing space enough to isolate a Timon or a Nebuchadnezzar; much less, in fair weather, to please that less repellent tribe, the poets, philosophers, artists, and others who "conceive and meditate of pleasant things."

Some old earthen camp or barrow, some clump of trees, at least some starved fragment of ancient hedge, is usually taken advantage of in the erection of these forlorn dwellings. But, in the present case, such a kind of shelter

[1] From "Wessex Tales." By permission of Harper and Brothers.

had been disregarded. Higher Crowstairs, as the house was called, stood quite detached and undefended. The only reason for its precise situation seemed to be the crossing of two footpaths at right angles hard by, which may have crossed there and thus for a good five hundred years. The house was thus exposed to the elements on all sides. But, though the wind up here blew unmistakably when it did blow, and the rain hit hard whenever it fell, the various weathers of the winter season were not quite so formidable on the coomb as they were imagined to be by dwellers on low ground. The raw rimes were not so pernicious as in the hollows, and the frosts were scarcely so severe. When the shepherd and his family who tenanted the house were pitied for their sufferings from the exposure, they said that upon the whole they were less inconvenienced by "wuzzes and flames" (hoarses and phlegms) than when they had lived by the stream of a snug neighbouring valley.

The night of March 28, 182–, was precisely one of the nights that were wont to call forth these expressions of commiseration. The level rainstorm smote walls, slopes, and hedges like the clothyard shafts of Senlac and Crecy. Such sheep and outdoor animals as had no shelter stood with their buttocks to the wind; while the tails of little birds trying to roost on some scraggy thorn were blown inside-out like umbrellas. The gable-end of the cottage was stained with wet, and the eaves-droppings flapped against the wall. Yet never was commiseration for the shepherd more misplaced. For that cheerful rustic was entertaining a large party in glorification of the christening of his second girl.

The guests had arrived before the rain began to fall, and they were all now assembled in the chief or living-room of the dwelling. A glance into the apartment at eight o'clock on this eventful evening would have resulted in the opinion that it was as cosy and comfortable a nook as could be wished for in boisterous weather. The calling of its inhabitant was proclaimed by a number of highly-polished sheep-crooks without stems that were hung ornamentally over the fireplace, the curl of each shining

crook varying from the antiquated type engraved in the patriarchal pictures of old family Bibles to the most approved fashion of the last local sheep-fair. The room was lighted by half-a-dozen candles, having wicks only a trifle smaller than the grease which enveloped them, in candlesticks that were never used but at high-days, holydays, and family feasts. The lights were scattered about the room, two of them standing on the chimney-piece. This position of candles was in itself significant. Candles on the chimney-piece always meant a party.

On the hearth, in front of a back-brand, to give substance, blazed a fire of thorns, that crackled "like the laughter of the fool."

Nineteen persons were gathered here. Of these, five women, wearing gowns of various bright hues, sat in chairs along the wall; girls shy and not shy filled the window-bench; four men, including Charley Jake, the hedge-carpenter, Elijah New, the parish-clerk, and John Pitcher, a neighbouring dairyman, the shepherd's father-in-law, lolled in the settle; a young man and maid, who were blushing over tentative *pourparlers* on a life-companionship, sat beneath the corner-cupboard; and an elderly engaged man of fifty or upward moved restlessly about from spots where his betrothed was not to the spot where she was. Enjoyment was pretty general, and so much the more prevailed in being unhampered by conventional restrictions. Absolute confidence in each other's good opinion begat perfect ease, while the finishing stroke of manner, amounting to a truly princely serenity, was lent to the majority by the absence of any expression or trait denoting that they wished to get on in the world, enlarge their minds, or do any eclipsing thing whatever—which nowadays so generally nips the bloom and *bonhomie* of all except the two extremes of the social scale.

Shepherd Fennel had married well, his wife being a dairyman's daughter from the valley below, who brought fifty guineas in her pocket—and kept them there, till they should be required for ministering to the needs of a coming family. This frugal woman had been somewhat exer-

cised as to the character that should be given to the gathering. A sit-still party had its advantages; but an undisturbed position of ease in chairs and settles was apt to lead on the men to such an unconscionable deal of toping that they would sometimes fairly drink the house dry. A dancing-party was the alternative; but this, while avoiding the foregoing objection on the score of good drink, had a counterbalancing disadvantage in the matter of good victuals, the ravenous appetites engendered by the exercise causing immense havoc in the buttery. Shepherdess Fennel fell back upon the intermediate plan of mingling short dances with short periods of talk and singing, so as to hinder any ungovernable rage in either. But this scheme was entirely confined to her own gentle mind: the shepherd himself was in the mood to exhibit the most reckless phases of hospitality.

The fiddler was a boy of those parts, about twelve years of age, who had a wonderful dexterity in jigs and reels, though his fingers were so small and short as to necessitate a constant shifting for the high notes, from which he scrambled back to the first position with sounds not of unmixed purity of tone. At seven the shrill tweedle-dee of this youngster had begun, accompanied by a booming ground-bass from Elijah New, the parish-clerk, who had thoughtfully brought with him his favourite musical instrument, the serpent. Dancing was instantaneous, Mrs. Fennel privately enjoining the players on no account to let the dance exceed the length of a quarter of an hour.

But Elijah and the boy, in the excitement of their position, quite forgot the injunction. Moreover, Oliver Giles, a man of seventeen, one of the dancers, who was enamoured of his partner, a fair girl of thirty-three rolling years, had recklessly handed a new crown-piece to the musicians, as a bribe to keep going as long as they had muscle and wind. Mrs. Fennel, seeing the steam begin to generate on the countenances of her guests, crossed over and touched the fiddler's elbow and put her hand on the serpent's mouth. But they took no notice, and fearing she might lose her character of genial hostess if she were to interfere too mark-

edly, she retired and sat down, helpless. And so the dance whizzed on with cumulative fury, the performers moving in their planet-like courses, direct and retrograde, from apogee to perigee, till the hand of the well-kicked clock at the bottom of the room had travelled over the circumference of an hour.

While these cheerful events were in course of enactment within Fennel's pastoral dwelling, an incident having considerable bearing on the party had occurred in the gloomy night without. Mrs. Fennel's concern about the growing fierceness of the dance corresponded in point of time with the ascent of a human figure to the solitary hill of Higher Crowstairs from the direction of the distant town. This personage strode on through the rain without a pause, following the little-worn path which, further on in its course, skirted the shepherd's cottage.

It was nearly the time of full moon, and on this account, though the sky was lined with a uniform sheet of dripping cloud, ordinary objects out of doors were readily visible. The sad wan light revealed the lonely pedestrian to be a man of supple frame; his gait suggested that he had somewhat passed the period of perfect and instinctive agility, though not so far as to be otherwise than rapid of motion when occasion required. In point of fact, he might have been about forty years of age. He appeared tall, but a recruiting sergeant, or other person accustomed to the judging of men's heights by the eye, would have discerned that this was chiefly owing to his gauntness, and that he was not more than five feet eight or nine.

Notwithstanding the regularity of his tread, there was caution in it, as in that of one who mentally feels his way; and despite the fact that it was not a black coat nor a dark garment of any sort that he wore, there was something about him which suggested that he naturally belonged to the black-coated tribes of men. His clothes were of fustian, and his boots hobnailed, yet in his progress he showed not the mud-accustomed bearing of hobnailed and fustianed peasantry.

By the time that he had arrived abreast of the shep-

herd's premises the rain came down, or rather came along, with yet more determined violence. The outskirts of the little homestead partially broke the force of wind and rain, and this induced him to stand still. The most salient of the shepherd's domestic erections was an empty sty at the forward corner of his hedgeless garden, for in these latitudes the principle of masking the homelier features of your establishment by a conventional frontage was unknown. The traveller's eye was attracted to this small building by the pallid shine of the wet slates that covered it. He turned aside, and, finding it empty, stood under the pent-roof for shelter.

While he stood, the boom of the serpent within, and the lesser strains of the fiddler, reached the spot as an accompaniment to the surging hiss of the flying rain on the sod, its louder beating on the cabbage-leaves of the garden, on the eight or ten bee-hives just discernible by the path, and its dripping from the eaves into a row of buckets and pans that had been placed under the walls of the cottage. For at Higher Crowstairs, as at all such elevated domiciles, the grand difficulty of housekeeping was an insufficiency of water; and a casual rainfall was utilised by turning out, as catchers, every utensil that the house contained. Some queer stories might be told of the contrivances for economy in suds and dish-waters that are absolutely necessitated in upland habitations during the droughts of summer. But at this season there were no such exigencies: a mere acceptance of what the skies bestowed was sufficient for an abundant store.

At last the notes of the serpent ceased and the house was silent. This cessation of activity aroused the solitary pedestrian from the reverie into which he had lapsed, and, emerging from the shed, with an apparently new intention, he walked up the path to the house-door. Arrived here, his first act was to kneel down on a large stone beside the row of vessels, and to drink a copious draught from one of them. Having quenched his thirst, he rose and lifted his hand to knock, but paused with his eye upon the panel. Since the dark surface of the wood revealed absolutely

nothing, it was evident that he must be mentally looking through the door, as if he wished to measure thereby all the possibilities that a house of this sort might include, and how they might bear upon the question of his entry.

In his indecision he turned and surveyed the scene around. Not a soul was anywhere visible. The garden-path stretched downward from his feet, gleaming like the track of a snail; the roof of the little well (mostly dry), the well cover, the top rail of the garden-gate, were varnished with the same dull liquid glaze; while, far away in the vale, a faint whiteness of more than usual extent showed that the rivers were high in the meads. Beyond all this winked a few bleared lamplights through the beating drops, lights that denoted the situation of the country-town from which he had appeared to come. The absence of all notes of life in that direction seemed to clinch his intentions, and he knocked at the door.

Within, a desultory chat had taken the place of movement and musical sound. The hedge-carpenter was suggesting a song to the company, which nobody just then was inclined to undertake, so that the knock afforded a not unwelcome diversion.

"Walk in!" said the shepherd promptly.

The latch clicked upward, and out of the night our pedestrian appeared upon the door-mat. The shepherd arose, snuffed two of the nearest candles, and turned to look at him.

Their light disclosed that the stranger was dark in complexion, and not unprepossessing as to feature. His hat, which for a moment he did not remove, hung low over his eyes, without concealing that they were large, open, and determined, moving with a flash rather than a glance round the room. He seemed pleased with the survey, and, baring his shaggy head, said, in a rich deep voice, "The rain is so heavy, friends, that I ask leave to come in and rest awhile."

"To be sure, stranger," said the shepherd. "And faith, you've been lucky in choosing your time, for we are having a bit of a fling for a glad cause—though to be sure

a man could hardly wish that glad cause to happen more than once a year."

"Nor less," spoke up a woman. "For 'tis best to get your family over and done with, as soon as you can, so as to be all the earlier out of the fag o't."

"And what may be this glad cause?" asked the stranger.

"A birth and christening," said the shepherd.

The stranger hoped his host might not be made unhappy either by too many or too few of such episodes, and being invited by a gesture to a pull at the mug, he readily acquiesced. His manner, which before entering had been so dubious, was now altogether that of a careless and candid man.

"Late to be traipsing athwart this coomb—hey?" said the engaged man of fifty.

"Late it is, master, as you say.—I'll take a seat in the chimney-corner, if you have nothing to urge against it, ma'am; for I am a little moist on the side that was next the rain."

Mrs. Shepherd Fennel assented, and made room for the self-invited comer, who, having got completely inside the chimney-corner, stretched out his legs and his arms with the expansiveness of a person quite at home.

"Yes, I am rather thin in the vamp," he said freely, seeing that the eyes of the shepherd's wife fell upon his boots, "and I am not well fitted, either. I have had some rough times lately, and have been forced to pick up what I can get in the way of wearing, but I must find a suit better fit for working-days when I reach home."

"One of hereabouts?" she enquired.

"Not quite that—further up the country."

"I thought so. And so am I; and by your tongue, you come from my neighbourhood."

"But you would hardly have heard of me," he said quickly. "My time would be long before yours, ma'am, you see."

This testimony to the youthfulness of his hostess had the effect of stopping her cross-examination.

"There is only one thing more wanted to make me

happy," continued the newcomer. "And that is a little baccy, which I am sorry to say I am out of."

"I'll fill your pipe," said the shepherd.

"I must ask you to lend me a pipe likewise."

"A smoker, and no pipe about ye?"

"I have dropped it somewhere on the road."

The shepherd filled and handed him a new clay pipe, saying, as he did so, "Hand me your baccy-box.—I'll fill that too, now I am about it."

The man went through the movement of searching his pockets.

"Lost that too?" said his entertainer, with some surprise.

"I am afraid so," said the man with some confusion. "Give it to me in a screw of paper." Lighting his pipe at the candle with a suction that drew the whole flame into the bowl, he resettled himself in the corner and bent his looks upon the faint steam from his damp legs, as if he wished to say no more.

Meanwhile the general body of guests had been taking little notice of this visitor by reason of an absorbing discussion in which they were engaged with the band about a tune for the next dance. The matter being settled, they were about to stand up, when an interruption came in the shape of another knock at the door.

At sound of the same the man in the chimney-corner took up the poker and began stirring the fire as if doing it thoroughly were the one aim of his existence; and a second time the shepherd said, "Walk in!" In a moment another man stood upon the straw-woven door-mat. He too was a stranger.

This individual was one of a type radically different from the first. There was more of the commonplace in his manner, and a certain jovial cosmopolitanism sat upon his features. He was several years older than the first arrival, his hair being slightly frosted, his eyebrows bristly, and his whiskers cut back from his cheeks. His face was rather full and flabby, and yet it was not altogether a face without power. A few grog-blossoms marked the neigh-

bourhood of his nose. He flung back his long drab great-coat, revealing that beneath it he wore a suit of cinder-grey shade throughout, large heavy seals, of some metal or other that would take a polish, dangling from his fob as his only personal ornament. Shaking the water-drops from his low-crowned glazed hat, he said, "I must ask for a few minutes' shelter, comrades, or I shall be wetted to my skin before I get to Casterbridge."

"Make yerself at home, master," said the shepherd, perhaps a trifle less heartily than on the first occasion. Not that Fennel had the least tinge of niggardliness in his composition; but the room was far from large, spare chairs were not numerous, and damp companions were not altogether comfortable at close quarters for the women and girls in their bright-coloured gowns.

However, the second comer, after taking off his great-coat, and hanging his hat on a nail in one of the ceiling-beams as if he had been specially invited to put it there, advanced and sat down at the table. This had been pushed so closely into the chimney-corner, to give all available room to the dancers, that its inner edge grazed the elbow of the man who had ensconced himself by the fire; and thus the two strangers were brought into close companionship. They nodded to each other by way of breaking the ice of unacquaintance, and the first stranger handed his neighbour the large mug—a huge vessel of brown ware, having its upper edge worn away like a threshold by the rub of whole genealogies of thirsty lips that had gone the way of all flesh, and bearing the following inscription burnt upon its rotund side in yellow letters:

"THERE IS NO FUN
UNTILL I CUM."

The other man, nothing loth, raised the mug to his lips, and drank on, and on, and on—till a curious blueness overspead the countenance of the shepherd's wife, who had regarded with no little surprise the first stranger's free offer to the second of what did not belong to him to dispense.

"I knew it!" said the toper to the shepherd with much satisfaction. "When I walked up your garden afore coming in, and saw the hives all of a row, I said to myself, 'Where there's bees there's honey, and where there's honey there's mead.' But mead of such a truly comfortable sort as this I really didn't expect to meet in my older days." He took yet another pull at the mug, till it assumed an ominous horizontality.

"Glad you enjoy it!" said the shepherd warmly.

"It is goodish mead," assented Mrs. Fennel with an absence of enthusiasm, which seemed to say that it was possible to buy praise for one's cellar at too heavy a price. "It is trouble enough to make—and really I hardly think we shall make any more. For honey sells well, and we can make shift with a drop o' small mead and metheglin for common use from the comb-washings."

"Oh, but you'll never have the heart!" reproachfully cried the stranger in cinder-grey, after taking up the mug a third time and setting it down empty. "I love mead, when 'tis old like this, as I love to go to church o' Sundays, or to relieve the needy any day of the week."

"Ha, ha, ha!" said the man in the chimney-corner, who, in spite of the tactiturnity induced by the pipe of tobacco, could not or would not refrain from this slight testimony to his comrade's humour.

Now, the old mead of those days, brewed of the purest first-year, or maiden honey, four pounds to the gallon—with its due complement of whites of eggs, cinnamon, ginger, cloves, mace, rosemary, yeast and processes of working, bottling, and cellaring—tasted remarkably strong; but it did not taste so strong as it actually was. Hence, presently, the stranger in cinder-grey at the table, moved by its creeping influence, unbuttoned his waistcoat, threw himself back in his chair, spread his legs, and made his presence felt in various ways.

"Well, well, as I say," he resumed, "I am going to Casterbridge, and to Casterbridge I must go. I should have been almost there by this time; but the storm drove me into ye; and I'm not sorry for it."

"You don't live in Casterbridge?" said the shepherd.

"Not as yet; though I shortly mean to move there."

"Going to set up in trade, perhaps?"

"No, no," said the shepherd's wife. "It is easy to see that the gentleman is rich, and don't want to work at anything."

The cinder-grey stranger paused, as if to consider whether he would accept that definition of himself. He presently rejected it by answering, "Rich is not quite the word for me, dame. I do work, and I must work. And even if I only get to Casterbridge by midnight I must begin work there at eight to-morrow morning. Yes, het or wet, blow or snow, famine or sword, my day's work to-morrow must be done."

"Poor man! Then, in spite o' seeming, you be worse off than we?" replied the shepherd's wife.

"'Tis the nature of my trade, men and maidens. 'Tis the nature of my trade more than my poverty. . . . But really and truly I must up and off, or I shan't get a lodging in the town." However, the speaker did not move, and directly added, "There's time for one more draught of friendship before I go; and I'd perform it at once if the mug were not dry."

"Here's a mug o' small," said Mrs. Fennel. "Small, we call it, though to be sure 'tis only the first wash o' the combs."

"No," said the stranger disdainfully. "I won't spoil your first kindness by partaking o' your second."

"Certainly not," broke in Fennel. "We don't increase and multiply every day, and I'll fill the mug again." He went away to the dark place under the stairs where the barrel stood. The shepherdess followed him.

"Why should you do this?" she said reproachfully, as soon as they were alone. "He's emptied it once, though it held enough for ten people; and now he's not contented wi' the small, but must needs call for more o' the strong! And a stranger unbeknown to any of us. For my part, I don't like the look o' the man at all."

"But he's in the house, my honey, and 'tis a wet night,

and a christening. Daze it, what's a cup of mead more or less? there'll be plenty more next bee-burning."

"Very well—this time, then," she answered, looking wistfully at the barrel. "But what is the man's calling, and where is he one of, that he should come in and join us like this?"

"I don't know. I'll ask him again."

The catastrophe of having the mug drained dry at one pull by the stranger in cinder-grey was effectually guarded against this time by Mrs. Fennel. She poured out his allowance in a small cup, keeping the large one at a discreet distance from him. When he had tossed off his portion the shepherd renewed his inquiry about the stranger's occupation.

The latter did not immediately reply, and the man in the chimney-corner, with sudden demonstrativeness, said, "Anybody may know my trade—I'm a wheelwright."

"A very good trade for these parts," said the shepherd.

"And anybody may know mine—if they've the sense to find it out," said the stranger in cinder-grey.

"You may generally tell what a man is by his claws," observed the hedge-carpenter, looking at his hands. "My fingers be as full of thorns as an old pincushion is of pins."

The hands of the man in the chimney-corner instinctively sought the shade, and he gazed into the fire as he resumed his pipe. The man at the table took up the hedge-carpenter's remark, and added smartly, "True; but the oddity of my trade is that, instead of setting a mark upon me, it sets a mark upon my customers."

No observation being offered by anybody in elucidation of this enigma, the shepherd's wife once more called for a song. The same obstacles presented themselves as at the former time—one had no voice, another had forgotten the first verse. The stranger at the table, whose soul had now risen to a good working temperature, relieved the difficulty by exclaiming that, to start the company, he would sing himself. Thrusting one thumb into the arm-hole of his waistcoat, he waved the other hand in the air, and,

with an extemporising gaze at the shining sheep-crooks above the mantelpiece, began:—

Oh my trade it is the rarest one,
Simple shepherds all—
My trade is a sight to see;
For my customers I tie, and take them up on high,
And waft 'em to a far countree.

The room was silent when he had finished the verse—with one exception, that of the man in the chimney-corner, who, at the singer's word, "Chorus!" joined him in a deep bass voice of musical relish—

And waft 'em to a far countree.

Oliver Giles, John Pitcher the dairyman, the parish-clerk, the engaged man of fifty, the row of young women against the wall, seemed lost in thought not of the gayest kind. The shepherd looked meditatively on the ground, the shepherdess gazed keenly at the singer, and with some suspicion; she was doubting whether this stranger were merely singing an old song from recollection, or was composing one there and then for the occasion. All were as perplexed at the obscure revelation as the guests at Belshazzar's Feast, except the man in the chimney-corner, who quietly said, "Second verse, stranger," and smoked on.

The singer thoroughly moistened himself from his lips inwards, and went on with the next stanza as requested:

My tools are but common ones,
Simple shepherds all,
My tools are no sight to see:
A little hempen string, and a post whereon to swing,
Are implements enough for me.

Shepherd Fennel glanced round. There was no longer any doubt that the stranger was answering his question rhythmically. The guests, one and all started back with suppressed exclamations. The young woman engaged to the man of fifty fainted half-way, and would have proceeded,

but finding him waiting in alacrity for catching her she sat down trembling.

"Oh, he's the——!" whispered the people in the background, mentioning the name of an ominous public officer. "He's come to do it. 'Tis to be at Casterbridge gaol tomorrow—the man for sheep-stealing—the poor clock-maker we heard of, who used to live away at Anglebury and had no work to do—Timothy Sommers, whose family were a-starving, and so he went out of Anglebury by the high-road, and took a sheep in open daylight, defying the farmer and the farmer's wife and the farmer's man, and every man jack among 'em. He" (and they nodded towards the stranger of the terrible trade) "is come from up the country to do it because there's not enough to do in his own county-town, and he's got the place here now our own county man's dead; he's going to live in the same cottage under the prison wall."

The stranger in cinder-grey took no notice of this whispered string of observations, but again wetted his lips. Seeing that his friend in the chimney-corner was the only one who reciprocated his joviality in any way, he held out his cup towards that appreciative comrade, who also held out his own. They clinked together, the eyes of the rest of the room hanging upon the singer's actions. He parted his lips for the third verse; but at that moment another knock was audible upon the door. This time the knock was faint and hesitating.

The company seemed scared; the shepherd looked with consternation towards the entrance, and it was with some effort that he resisted his alarmed wife's deprecatory glance, and uttered for the third time the welcoming words "Walk in!"

The door was gently opened, and another man stood upon the mat. He, like those who had preceded him, was a stranger. This time it was a short, small personage, of fair complexion, and dressed in a decent suit of dark clothes.

"Can you tell me the way to——?" he began: when, gazing around the room to observe the nature of the com-

pany amongst whom he had fallen, his eyes lighted on the stranger in cinder-grey. It was just at the instant when the latter, who had thrown his mind into his song with such a will that he scarcely heeded the interruption, silenced all whispers and inquiries by bursting into his third verse:

To-morrow is my working day,
Simple shepherds all—
To-morrow is a working day for me:
For the farmer's sheep is slain, and the lad who did it ta'en,
And on his soul may God ha' merc-y!

The stranger in the chimney-corner, waving cups with the singer so heartily that his mead splashed over on the hearth, repeated in his bass voice as before:

And on his soul may God ha' merc-y!

All this time the third stranger had been standing in the doorway. Finding now that he did not come forward or go on speaking, the guests particularly regarded him. They noticed to their surprise that he stood before them the picture of abject terror—his knees trembling, his hand shaking so violently that the door-latch by which he supported himself rattled audibly; his white lips were parted, and his eyes fixed on the merry officer of justice in the middle of the room. A moment more and he had turned, closed the door, and fled.

"What a man can it be?" said the shepherd.

The rest, between the awfulness of their late discovery and the odd conduct of this third visitor, looked as if they knew not what to think, and said nothing. Instinctively they withdrew further and further from the grim gentleman in their midst, whom some of them seemed to take for the Prince of Darkness himself, till they formed a remote circle, an empty space of floor being left between them and him——

——*circulus, cujus centrum diabolus.*

The room was so silent—though there were more than twenty people in it—that nothing could be heard but the patter of the rain against the window-shutters, accompanied by the occasional hiss of a stray drop that fell down the chimney into the fire, and the steady puffing of the man in the corner, who had now resumed his pipe of long clay.

The stillness was unexpectedly broken. The distant sound of a gun reverberated through the air—apparently from the direction of the county-town.

"Be jiggered!" cried the stranger who had sung the song, jumping up.

"What does that mean?" asked several.

"A prisoner escaped from the gaol—that's what it means."

All listened. The sound was repeated, and none of them spoke but the man in the chimney-corner, who said quietly, "I've often been told that in this county they fire a gun at such times; but I never heard it till now."

"I wonder if it is *my* man?" murmured the personage in cinder-grey.

"Surely it is!" said the shepherd involuntarily. "And surely we've seen him! That little man who looked in at the door by now, and quivered like a leaf when he seed ye and heard your song!"

"His teeth chattered, and the breath went out of his body," said the dairyman.

"And his heart seemed to sink within him like a stone," said Oliver Giles.

"And he bolted as if he'd been shot at," said the hedge-carpenter.

"True—his teeth chattered, and his heart seemed to sink; and he bolted as if he'd been shot at," slowly summed up the man in the chimney-corner.

"I didn't notice it," remarked the grim songster.

"We were all a-wondering what made him run off in such a fright," faltered one of the women against the wall, "and now 'tis explained."

The firing of the alarm-gun went on at intervals, low and sullenly, and their suspicions became a certainty. The sinister gentleman in cinder-grey roused himself. "Is there

a constable here?" he asked in thick tones. "If so, let him step forward."

The engaged man of fifty stepped quavering out of the corner, his betrothed beginning to sob on the back of the chair.

"You are a sworn constable?"

"I be, sir."

"Then pursue the criminal at once, with assistance, and bring him back here. He can't have gone far."

"I will, sir, I will—when I've got my staff. I'll go home and get it, and come sharp here, and start in a body."

"Staff!—never mind your staff; the man'll be gone!"

"But I can't do nothing without my staff—can I, William, and John, and Charles Jake? No; for there's the king's royal crown a painted on en in yaller and gold, and the lion and the unicorn, so as when I raise en up and hit my prisoner, 'tis made a lawful blow thereby. I wouldn't 'tempt to take up a man without my staff—no, not I. If I hadn't the law to gie me courage, why, instead o' my taking up him he might take up me!"

"Now, I'm a king's man myself, and can give you authority enough for this," said the formidable person in cinder-grey. "Now, then, all of ye, be ready. Have ye any lanterns?"

"Yes—have ye any lanterns?—I demand it," said the constable.

"And the rest of you able-bodied——"

"Able-bodied men—yes—the rest of ye," said the constable.

"Have you some good stout staves and pitchforks——"

"Staves and pitchforks—in the name o' the law. And take 'em in yer hands and go in quest, and do as we in authority tell ye."

Thus aroused, the men prepared to give chase. The evidence was, indeed, though circumstantial, so convincing, that but little argument was needed to show the shepherd's guests that after what they had seen it would look very much like connivance if they did not instantly pursue the unhappy third stranger, who could not as yet have

gone more than a few hundred yards over such uneven country.

A shepherd is always well provided with lanterns; and, lighting these hastily, and with hurdle-staves in their hands, they poured out of the door, taking a direction along the crest of the hill, away from the town, the rain having fortunately a little abated.

Disturbed by the noise, or possibly by unpleasant dreams of her baptism, the child who had been christened began to cry heartbrokenly in the room overhead. These notes of grief came down through the chinks of the floor to the ears of the women below, who jumped up one by one, and seemed glad of the excuse to ascend and comfort the baby, for the incidents of the last half hour greatly oppressed them. Thus in the space of two or three minutes the room on the ground floor was deserted quite.

But it was not for long. Hardly had the sound of footsteps died away when a man returned round the corner of the house from the direction the pursuers had taken. Peeping in at the door, and seeing nobody there, he entered leisurely. It was the stranger of the chimney-corner, who had gone out with the rest. The motive of his return was shown by his helping himself to a cut piece of skimmer-cake that lay on a ledge beside where he had sat, and which he had apparently forgotten to take with him. He also poured out half a cup more mead from the quantity that remained, ravenously eating and drinking these as he stood. He had not finished when another figure came in just as quietly—the stranger in cinder-grey.

"Oh—you here?" said the latter smiling. "I thought you had gone to help in the capture." And this speaker also revealed the object of his return by looking solicitously round for the fascinating mug of old mead.

"And I thought you had gone," said the other, continuing his skimmer-cake with some effort.

"Well, on second thoughts, I felt there were enough without me," said the first confidentially, "and such a night as it is, too. Besides, 'tis the business o' the Government to take care of its criminals—not mine."

"True; so it is. And I felt as you did, that there were enough without me."

"I don't want to break my limbs running over the humps and hollows of this wild country."

"Nor I neither, between you and me."

"These shepherd-people are used to it—simple-minded souls, you know, stirred up to anything in a moment. They'll have him ready for me before the morning, and no trouble to me at all."

"They'll have him, and we shall have saved ourselves all labour in the matter."

"True, true. Well, my way is to Casterbridge; and 'tis as much as my legs will do to take me that far. Going the same way?"

"No, I am sorry to say. I have to get home over there" (he nodded indefinitely to the right), "and I feel as you do, that it is quite enough for my legs to do before bed-time."

The other had by this time finished the mead in the mug, after which, shaking hands at the door, and wishing each other well, they went their several ways.

In the meantime the company of pursuers had reached the end of the hog's-back elevation which dominated this part of the coomb. They had decided on no particular plan of action; and, finding that the man of the baleful trade was no longer in their company, they seemed quite unable to form any such plan now. They descended in all directions down the hill, and straightway several of the party fell into the snare set by Nature for all misguided midnight ramblers over the lower cretaceous formation. The "lynchets," or flint slopes, which belted the escarpments at intervals of a dozen yards, took the less cautious ones unawares, and losing their footing on the rubbly steep they slid sharply downwards, the lanterns rolling from their hands to the bottom, and there lying on their sides till the horn was scorched through.

When they had again gathered themselves together, the shepherd, as the man who knew the country best, took the lead, and guided them round these treacherous inclines.

The lanterns, which seemed rather to dazzle their eyes and warn the fugitive than to assist them in the exploration, were extinguished, due silence was observed; and in this more rational order they plunged into the vale. It was a grassy, briary, moist channel, affording some shelter to any person who had sought it; but the party perambulated it in vain, and ascended on the other side. Here they wandered apart, and after an interval closed together again to report progress. At the second time of closing in they found themselves near a lonely oak, the single tree on this part of the upland, probably sown there by a passing bird some hundred years before. And there, standing a little to one side of the trunk, as motionless as the trunk itself, appeared the man they were in quest of, his outline being well defined against the sky beyond. The band noiselessly drew up and faced him.

"Your money or your life!" said the constable sternly to the still figure.

"No, no," whispered John Pitcher. "'Tisn't our side ought to say that. That's the doctrine of vagabonds like him, and we be on the side of the law."

"Well, well," replied the constable impatiently; "I must say something, mustn't I? And if you had all o' the weight o' this undertaking upon your mind, perhaps you'd say the wrong thing, too.—Prisoner at the bar, surrender, in the name of the Fath—— the Crown I mane!"

The man under the tree seemed now to notice them for the first time, and, giving them no opportunity whatever for exhibiting their courage, he strolled slowly towards them. He was, indeed, the little man, the third stranger; but his trepidation had in a great measure gone.

"Well, travellers," he said, "did I hear ye speak to me?"

"You did: you've got to come and be our prisoner at once," said the constable. "We arrest ye on the charge of not biding in Casterbridge gaol in a decent proper manner to be hung to-morrow morning. Neighbours, do your duty, and seize the culpet!"

On hearing the charge, the man seemed enlightened, and, saying not another word, resigned himself with preternat-

ural civility to the search-party, who, with their staves in their hands, surrounded him on all sides, and marched him back towards the shepherd's cottage.

It was eleven o'clock by the time they arrived. The light shining from the open door, a sound of men's voices within, proclaimed to them as they approached the house that some new events had arisen in their absence. On entering they disscovered the shepherd's living-room to be invaded by two officers from Casterbridge gaol, and a well-known magistrate who lived at the nearest country seat, intelligence of the escape having become generally circulated.

"Gentlemen," said the constable, "I have brought back your man—not without risk and danger; but every one must do his duty. He is inside this circle of able-bodied persons, who have lent me useful aid considering their ignorance of Crown work. Men, bring forward your prisoner." And the third stranger was led to the light.

"Who is this?" said one of the officials.

"The man," said the constable.

"Certainly not," said the other turnkey; and the first corroborated his statement.

"But how can it be otherwise?" asked the constable. "Or why was he so terrified at sight o' the singing instrument of the law?" Here he related the strange behaviour of the third stranger on entering the house.

"Can't understand it," said the officer coolly. "All I know is that it is not the condemned man. He's quite a different character from this one; a gauntish fellow, with dark hair and eyes, rather good-looking, and with a musical bass voice that if you heard it once you'd never mistake as long as you lived."

"Why, souls—'twas the man in the chimney-corner!"

"Hey—what?" said the magistrate, coming forward after inquiring particulars from the shepherd in the background. "Haven't you got the man after all?"

"Well, sir," said the constable, "he's the man we were in search of, that's true; and yet he's not the man we were in search of. For the man we were in search of was not

the man we wanted, sir, if you understand my everyday way; for 'twas the man in the chimney-corner."

"A pretty kettle of fish altogether!" said the magistrate. "You had better start for the other man at once."

The prisoner now spoke for the first time. The mention of the man in the chimney-corner seemed to have moved him as nothing else could do. "Sir," he said, stepping forward to the magistrate, "take no more trouble about me. The time is come when I may as well speak. I have done nothing; my crime is that the condemned man is my brother. Early this afternoon I left home at Anglebury to tramp it all the way to Casterbridge gaol to bid him farewell. I was benighted, and called here to rest and ask the way. When I opened the door I saw before me the very man, my brother, that I thought to see in the condemned cell at Casterbridge. He was in this chimney-corner; and jammed close to him, so that he could not have got out if he had tried, was the executioner who'd come to take his life, singing a song about it and not knowing that it was the victim who was close by, joining in to save appearances. My brother looked a glance of agony at me, and I knew he meant, 'Don't reveal what you see; my life depends on it.' I was so terror-struck that I could hardly stand, and, not knowing what I did, I turned and hurried away."

The narrator's manner and tone had the stamp of truth, and his story made a great impression on all around. "And do you know where your brother is at the present time?" asked the magistrate.

"I do not. I have never seen him since I closed this door."

"I can testify to that, for we've been between ye ever since," said the constable.

"Where does he think to fly to?—what is his occupation?"

"He's a watch-and-clock-maker, sir."

"'A said 'a was a wheelwright—a wicked rogue," said the constable.

"The wheels o' clocks and watches he meant, no doubt,"

said Shepherd Fennel. "I thought his hands were palish for's trade."

"Well, it appears to me that nothing can be gained by retaining this poor man in custody," said the magistrate: "your business lies with the other, unquestionably."

And so the little man was released off-hand; but he looked nothing the less sad on that account, it being beyond the power of magistrate or constable to raze out the written troubles in his brain, for they concerned another whom he regarded with more solicitude than himself. When this was done, and the man had gone his way, the night was found to be so far advanced that it was deemed useless to renew the search before the next morning.

Next day, accordingly, the quest for the clever sheep-stealer became general and keen, to all appearance at least. But the intended punishment was cruelly disproportioned to the transgression, and the sympathy of a great many country folk in that district was strongly on the side of the fugitive. Moreover, his marvellous coolness and daring under the unprecedented circumstances of the shepherd's party won their admiration. So that it may be questioned if all those who ostensibly made themselves so busy in exploring woods and fields and lanes were quite so thorough when it came to the private examination of their own lofts and outhouses. Stories were afloat of a mysterious figure being occasionally seen in some old overgrown trackway or other, remote from turnpike roads; but when a search was instituted in any of these suspected quarters nobody was found. Thus the days and weeks passed without tidings.

In brief, the bass-voiced man of the chimney-corner was never recaptured. Some said that he went across the sea; others that he did not, but buried himself in the depths of a populous city. At any rate, the gentleman in cinder-grey never did his morning's work at Casterbridge, nor met anywhere at all, for business purposes, the comrade with whom he had passed an hour of relaxation in the lonely house on the coomb.

The grass has long been green on the graves of Shep-



herd Fennel and his frugal wife; the guests who made up the christening party have mainly followed their entertainers to the tomb; the baby in whose honour they all had met is a matron in the sere and yellow leaf. But the arrival of the three strangers at the shepherd's that night, and the details connected therewith, is a story as well known as ever in the country about Higher Crowstairs.

A LODGING FOR THE NIGHT

By Robert Louis Stevenson

IT was late in November, 1456. The snow fell over Paris with rigorous, relentless persistence; sometimes the wind made a sally and scattered it in flying vortices; sometimes there was a lull, and flake after flake descended out of the black night air, silent, circuitous, interminable. To poor people, looking up under moist eye brows, it seemed a wonder where it all came from. Master Francis Villon had propounded an alternative that afternoon, at a tavern window: was it only Pagan Jupiter plucking geese upon Olympus? or were the holy angels moulting? He was only a poor Master of Arts, he went on; and as the question somewhat touched upon divinity, he durst not venture to conclude. A silly old priest from Montargis, who was among the company, treated the young rascal to a bottle of wine in honour of the jest and grimaces with which it was accompanied, and swore on his own white beard that he had been just such another irreverent dog when he was Villon's age.

The air was raw and pointed, but not far below freezing; and the flakes were large, damp, and adhesive. The whole city was sheeted up. An army might have marched from end to end and not a footfall given the alarm. If there were any belated birds in heaven, they saw the island like a large white patch, and the bridges like slim white spars, on the black ground of the river. High up overhead the snow settled among the tracery of the cathedral towers. Many a niche was drifted full; many a statue wore a long white bonnet on its grotesque or sainted head. The gargoyles had been transformed into great false noses, drooping towards the point. The crockets were like upright pil-

lows swollen on one side. In the intervals of the wind, there was a dull sound of dripping about the precincts of the church.

The cemetery of St. John had taken its own share of the snow. All the graves were decently covered; tall white housetops stood around in grave array; worthy burghers were long ago in bed, be-nightcapped like their domiciles; there was no light in all the neighbourhood but a little peep from a lamp that hung swinging in the church choir, and tossed the shadows to and fro in time to its oscillations. The clock was hard on ten when the patrol went by with halberds and a lantern, beating their hands; and they saw nothing suspicious about the cemetery of St. John.

Yet there was a small house, backed up against the cemetery wall, which was still awake, and awake to evil purpose, in that snoring district. There was not much to betray it from without; only a stream of warm vapour from the chimney-top, a patch where the snow melted on the roof, and a few half-obliterated footprints at the door. But within, behind the shuttered windows, Master Francis Villon the poet, and some of the thievish crew with whom he consorted, were keeping the night alive and passing round the bottle.

A great pile of living embers diffused a strong and ruddy glow from the arched chimney. Before this straddled Dom Nicolas, the Picardy monk, with his skirts picked up and his fat legs bared to the comfortable warmth. His dilated shadow cut the room in half; and the firelight only escaped on either side of his broad person, and in a little pool between his outspread feet. His face had the beery, bruised appearance of the continual drinker's; it was covered with a network of congested veins, purple in ordinary circumstances, but now pale violet, for even with his back to the fire the cold pinched him on the other side. His cowl had half fallen back, and made a strange excrescence on either side of his bull neck. So he straddled, grumbling, and cut the room in half with the shadow of his portly frame.

On the right, Villon and Guy Tabary were huddled together over a scrap of parchment; Villon making a ballade which he was to call the "Ballade of Roast Fish," and Tabary spluttering admiration at his shoulder. The poet was a rag of a man, dark, little, and lean, with hollow cheeks and thin black locks. He carried his four-and-twenty years with feverish animation. Greed had made folds about his eyes, evil smiles had puckered his mouth. The wolf and pig struggled together in his face. It was an eloquent, sharp, ugly, earthly countenance. His hands were small and prehensile, with fingers knotted like a cord; and they were continually flickering in front of him in violent and expressive pantomime. As for Tabary, a broad, complacent, admiring imbecility breathed from his squash nose and slobbering lips: he had become a thief, just as he might have become the most decent of burgesses, by the imperious chance that rules the lives of human geese and human donkeys.

At the monk's other hand, Montigny and Thevenin Pensete played a game of chance. About the first there clung some flavour of good birth and training, as about a fallen angel; something long, lithe, and courtly in the person; something aquiline and darkling in the face. Thevenin, poor soul, was in great feather: he had done a good stroke of knavery that afternoon in the Faubourg St. Jacques, and all night he had been gaining from Montigny. A flat smile illuminated his face; his bald head shone rosily in a garland of red curls; his little protuberant stomach shook with silent chucklings as he swept in his gains.

"Doubles or quits?" said Thevenin.

Montigny nodded grimly.

"Some may prefer to dine in state," wrote Villon, *"On bread and cheese on silver plate.* Or, or—help me out, Guido!"

Tabary giggled.

"Or parsley on a golden dish," scribbled the poet.

The wind was freshening without; it drove the snow before it, and sometimes raised its voice in a victorious whoop, and made sepulchral grumblings in the chimney.

The cold was growing sharper as the night went on. Villon, protruding his lips, imitated the gust with something between a whistle and a groan. It was an eerie, uncomfortable talent of the poet's, much detested by the Picardy monk.

"Can't you hear it rattle in the gibbet?" said Villon. "They are all dancing the devil's jig on nothing, up there. You may dance, my gallants, you'll be none the warmer! Whew! what a gust! Down went somebody just now! A medlar the fewer on the three-legged medlar-tree!—I say, Dom Nicolas, it'll be cold to-night on the St. Denis Road?" he asked.

Dom Nicolas winked both his big eyes, and seemed to choke upon his Adam's apple. Montfaucon, the great grisly Paris gibbet, stood hard by the St. Denis Road, and the pleasantry touched him on the raw. As for Tabary, he laughed immoderately over the medlars; he had never heard anything more light-hearted; and he held his sides and crowed. Villon fetched him a fillip on the nose, which turned his mirth into an attack of coughing.

"Oh, stop that row," said Villon, "and think of rhymes to 'fish.'"

"Doubles or quits," said Montigny doggedly.

"With all my heart," quoth Thevenin.

"Is there any more in that bottle?" asked the monk.

"Open another," said Villon. "How do you ever hope to fill that big hogshead, your body, with little things like bottles? And how do you expect to get to heaven? How many angels, do you fancy, can be spared to carry up a single monk from Picardy? Or do you think yourself another Elias—and they'll send the coach for you?"

"*Hominibus impossibile,*" replied the monk as he filled his glass.

Tabary was in ecstasies.

Villon filliped his nose again.

"Laugh at my jokes, if you like," he said.

"It was very good," objected Tabary.

Villon made a face at him. "Think of rhymes to 'fish,'" he said. "What have you to do with Latin? You'll wish

you knew none of it at the great assizes, when the devil calls for Guido Tabary, clericus—the devil with the hump-back and red-hot finger-nails. Talking of the devil," he added in a whisper, "look at Montigny!"

All three peered covertly at the gamester. He did not seem to be enjoying his luck. His mouth was a little to a side; one nostril nearly shut, and the other much inflated. The black dog was on his back, as people say, in terrifying nursery metaphor; and he breathed hard under the gruesome burden.

"He looks as if he could knife him," whispered Tabary, with round eyes.

The monk shuddered, and turned his face and spread his open hands to the red embers. It was the cold that thus affected Dom Nicolas, and not any excess of moral sensibility.

"Come now," said Villon—"about this ballade. How does it run so far?" And beating time with his hand, he read it aloud to Tabary.

They were interrupted at the fourth rhyme by a brief and fatal movement among the gamesters. The round was completed, and Thevenin was just opening his mouth to claim another victory, when Montigny leaped up, swift as an adder, and stabbed him to the heart. The blow took effect before he had time to utter a cry, before he had time to move. A tremor or two convulsed his frame; his hands opened and shut, his heels rattled on the floor; then his head rolled backward over one shoulder with the eyes wide open, and Thevenin Pensete's spirit had returned to Him who made it.

Everyone sprang to his feet; but the business was over in two twos. The four living fellows looked at each other in rather a ghastly fashion; the dead man contemplating a corner of the roof with a singular and ugly leer.

"My God!" said Tabary; and he began to pray in Latin.

Villon broke out into hysterical laughter. He came a step forward and ducked a ridiculous bow at Thevenin, and laughed still louder. Then he sat down suddenly, all of a

heap, upon a stool, and continued laughing bitterly as though he would shake himself to pieces.

Montigny recovered his composure first.

"Let's see what he has about him," he remarked, and he picked the dead man's pockets with a practised hand, and divided the money into four equal portions on the table. "There's for you," he said.

The monk received his share with a deep sigh, and a single stealthy glance at the dead Thevenin, who was beginning to sink into himself and topple sideways off the chair.

"We're all in for it," cried Villon, swallowing his mirth. "It's a hanging job for every man jack of us that's here—not to speak of those who aren't." He made a shocking gesture in the air with his raised right hand, and put out his tongue and threw his head on one side, so as to counterfeit the appearance of one who has been hanged. Then he pocketed his share of the spoil, and executed a shuffle with his feet as if to restore the circulation.

Tabary was the last to help himself; he made a dash at the money, and retired to the other end of the apartment.

Montigny stuck Thevenin upright in the chair, and drew out the dagger, which was followed by a jet of blood.

"You fellows had better be moving," he said, as he wiped the blade on his victim's doublet.

"I think we had," returned Villon, with a gulp. "Damn his fat head!" he broke out. "It sticks in my throat like phlegm. What right has a man to have red hair when he is dead?" And he fell all of a heap again upon the stool, and fairly covered his face with his hands.

Montigny and Dom Nicolas laughed aloud, even Tabary feebly chiming in.

"Cry baby," said the monk.

"I always said he was a woman," added Montigny, with a sneer. "Sit up, can't you?" he went on, giving another shake to the murdered body. "Tread out that fire, Nick!"

But Nick was better employed; he was quietly taking Villon's purse, as the poet sat, limp and trembling, on the stool where he had been making a ballade not three min-

utes before. Montigny and Tabary dumbly demanded a share of the booty, which the monk silently promised as he passed the little bag into the bosom of his gown. In many ways an artistic nature unfits a man for practical existence.

No sooner had the theft been accomplished than Villon shook himself, jumped to his feet, and began helping to scatter and extinguish the embers. Meanwhile Montigny opened the door and cautiously peered into the street. The coast was clear; there was no meddlesome patrol in sight. Still it was judged wiser to slip out severally; and as Villon was himself in a hurry to escape from the neighbourhood of the dead Thevenin, and the rest were in a still greater hurry to get rid of him before he should discover the loss of his money, he was the first by general consent to issue forth into the street.

The wind had triumphed and swept all the clouds from heaven. Only a few vapours, as thin as moonlight, fleeted rapidly across the stars. It was bitter cold; and by a common optical effect, things seemed almost more definite than in the broadest daylight. The sleeping city was absolutely still; a company of white hoods, a field full of little alps, below the twinkling stars. Villon cursed his fortune. Would it were still snowing! Now, wherever he went, he left an indelible trail behind him on the glittering streets; wherever he went he was still tethered to the house by the cemetery of St. John; wherever he went he must weave, with his own plodding feet, the rope that bound him to the crime and would bind him to the gallows. The leer of the dead man came back to him with a new significance. He snapped his fingers as if to pluck up his own spirits, and choosing a street at random, stepped boldly forward in the snow.

Two things preoccupied him as he went: the aspect of the gallows at Montfaucon in this bright, windy phase of the night's existence, for one; and for another, the look of the dead man with his bald head and garland of red curls. Both struck cold upon his heart, and he kept quickening his pace as if he could escape from unpleasant thoughts by

mere fleetness of foot. Sometimes he looked back over his shoulder with a sudden nervous jerk; but he was the only moving thing in the white streets, except when the wind swooped round a corner and threw up the snow, which was beginning to freeze, in spouts of glittering dust.

Suddenly he saw, a long way before him, a black clump and a couple of lanterns. The clump was in motion, and the lanterns swung as though carried by men walking. It was a patrol. And though it was merely crossing his line of march he judged it wiser to get out of eyeshot as speedily as he could. He was not in the humour to be challenged, and he was conscious of making a very conspicuous mark upon the snow. Just on his left hand there stood a great hotel, with some turrets and a large porch before the door; it was half-ruinous, he remembered, and had long stood empty; and so he made three steps of it, and jumped into the shelter of the porch. It was pretty dark inside, after the glimmer of the snowy streets, and he was groping forward with outspread hands, when he stumbled over some substance which offered an indescribable mixture of resistances, hard and soft, firm and loose. His heart gave a leap, and he sprang two steps back and stared dreadfully at the obstacle. Then he gave a little laugh of relief. It was only a woman, and she dead. He knelt beside her to make sure upon this latter point. She was freezing cold, and rigid like a stick. A little ragged finery fluttered in the wind about her hair, and her cheeks had been heavily rouged that same afternoon. Her pockets were quite empty; but in her stocking, underneath the garter, Villon found two of the small coins that went by the name of whites. It was little enough; but it was always something; and the poet was moved with a deep sense of pathos that she should have died before she had spent her money. That seemed to him a dark and pitiable mystery; and he looked from the coins in his hand to the dead woman, and back again to the coins, shaking his head over the riddle of man's life. Henry V. of England, dying at Vincennes just after he had conquered France, and this poor jade cut off by a cold draught in a great man's doorway, before she

had time to spend her couple of whites—it seemed a cruel way to carry on the world. Two whites would have taken such a little while to squander; and yet it would have been one more good taste in the mouth, one more smack of the lips, before the devil got the soul, and the body was left to birds and vermin. He would like to use all his tallow before the light was blown out and the lantern broken.

While these thoughts were passing through his mind, he was feeling, half mechanically, for his purse. Suddenly his heart stopped beating; a feeling of cold scales passed up the back of his legs, and a cold blow seemed to fall upon his scalp. He stood petrified for a moment; then he felt again with one feverish movement; and then his loss burst upon him, and he was covered at once with perspiration. To spendthrifts money is so living and actual—it is such a thin veil between them and their pleasures! There is only one limit to their fortune—that of time; and a spendthrift with only a few crowns is the Emperor of Rome until they are spent. For such a person to lose his money is to suffer the most shocking reverse, and fall from heaven to hell, from all to nothing, in a breath. And all the more if he has put his head in the halter for it; if he may be hanged to-morrow for that same purse, so dearly earned, so foolishly departed! Villon stood and cursed; he threw the two whites into the street; he shook his fist at heaven; he stamped, and was not horrified to find himself trampling the poor corpse. Then he began rapidly to retrace his steps towards the house beside the cemetery. He had forgotten all fear of the patrol, which was long gone by at any rate, and had no idea but that of his lost purse. It was in vain that he looked right and left upon the snow: nothing was to be seen. He had not dropped it in the streets. Had it fallen in the house? He would have liked dearly to go in and see; but the idea of the grisly occupant unmanned him. And he saw besides, as he drew near, that their efforts to put out the fire had been unsuccessful; on the contrary, it had broken into a blaze, and a changeful light played in the chinks of door and window, and revived his terror for the authorities and Paris gibbet.

He returned to the hotel with the porch, and groped about upon the snow for the money he had thrown away in his childish passion. But he could only find one white; the other had probably struck sideways and sunk deeply in. With a single white in his pocket, all his projects for a rousing night in some wild tavern vanished utterly away. And it was not only pleasure that fled laughing from his grasp; positive discomfort, positive pain, attacked him as he stood ruefully before the porch. His perspiration had dried upon him; and although the wind had now fallen, a binding frost was setting in stronger with every hour, and he felt benumbed and sick at heart. What was to be done? Late as was the hour, improbable as was success, he would try the house of his adopted father, the chaplain of St. Benoit.

He ran there all the way, and knocked timidly. There was no answer. He knocked again and again, taking heart with every stroke; and at last steps were heard approaching from within. A barred wicket fell open in the iron-studded door, and emitted a gush of yellow light.

"Hold up your face to the wicket," said the chaplain from within.

"It's only me," whimpered Villon.

"Oh, it's only you, is it?" returned the chaplain; and he cursed him with foul unpriestly oaths for disturbing him at such an hour, and bade him be off to hell, where he came from.

"My hands are blue to the wrist," pleaded Villon; "my feet are dead and full of twinges; my nose aches with the sharp air; the cold lies at my heart. I may be dead before morning. Only this once, father, and before God, I will never ask again!"

"You should have come earlier," said the ecclesiastic coolly. "Young men require a lesson now and then." He shut the wicket and retired deliberately into the interior of the house.

Villon was beside himself; he beat upon the door with his hands and feet, and shouted hoarsely after the chaplain.

"Wormy old fox!" he cried. "If I had my hand under

your twist, I would send you flying headlong into the bottomless pit."

A door shut in the interior, faintly audible to the poet down long passages. He passed his hand over his mouth with an oath. And then the humour of the situation struck him, and he laughed and looked lightly up to heaven, where the stars seemed to be winking over his discomfiture.

What was to be done? It looked very like a night in the frosty streets. The idea of the dead woman popped into his imagination, and gave him a hearty fright; what had happened to her in the early night might very well happen to him before morning. And he so young! and with such immense possibilities of disorderly amusement before him! He felt quite pathetic over the notion of his own fate, as if it had been some one else's, and made a little imaginative vignette of the scene in the morning when they should find his body.

He passed all his chances under review, turning the white between his thumb and forefinger. Unfortunately he was on bad terms with some old friends who would once have taken pity on him in such a plight. He had lampooned them in verses; he had beaten and cheated them; and yet now, when he was in so close a pinch, he thought there was at least one who might perhaps relent. It was chance. It was worth trying at least, and he would go and see.

On the way, two little accidents happened to him which coloured his musings in a very different manner. For, first, he fell in with the track of a patrol, and walked in it for some hundred yards, although it lay out of his direction. And this spirited him up; at least he had confused his trail; for he was still possessed with the idea of people tracking him all about Paris over the snow, and collaring him next morning before he was awake. The other matter affected him quite differently. He passed a street corner, where, not so long before, a woman and her child had been devoured by wolves. This was just the kind of weather, he reflected, when wolves might take it into their heads to enter Paris again; and a lone man in these deserted

streets would run the chance of something worse than a mere scare. He stopped and looked upon the place with an unpleasant interest—it was a centre where several lanes intersected each other; and he looked down them all, one after another, and held his breath to listen, lest he should detect some galloping black things on the snow or hear the sound of howling between him and the river. He remembered his mother telling him the story and pointing out the spot, while he was yet a child. His mother! If he only knew where she lived, he might make sure at least of shelter. He determined he would inquire upon the morrow; nay, he would go and see her too, poor old girl! So thinking, he arrived at his destination—his last hope for the night.

The house was quite dark, like its neighbours; and yet after a few taps, he heard a movement overhead, a door opening, and a cautious voice asking who was there. The poet named himself in a loud whisper, and waited, not without some trepidation, the result. Nor had he to wait long. A window was suddenly opened, and a pailful of slops splashed down upon the doorstep. Villon had not been unprepared for something of the sort, and had put himself as much in shelter as the nature of the porch admitted; but for all that, he was deplorably drenched below the waist. His hose began to freeze almost at once. Death from cold and exposure stared him in the face; he remembered he was of phthisical tendency, and began coughing tentatively. But the gravity of the danger steadied his nerves. He stopped a few hundred yards from the door where he had been so rudely used, and reflected with his finger to his nose. He could only see one way of getting a lodging, and that was to take it. He had noticed a house not far away, which looked as if it might be easily broken into, and thither he betook himself promptly, entertaining himself on the way with the idea of a room still hot, with a table still loaded with the remains of supper, where he might pass the rest of the black hours and whence he should issue, on the morrow, with an armful of valuable plate. He even considered on what viands and what wines he

should prefer; and as he was calling the roll of his favourite dainties, roast fish presented itself to his mind with an odd mixture of amusement and horror.

"I shall never finish that ballade," he thought to himself; and then, with another shudder at the recollection, "Oh, damn his fat head!" he repeated fervently, and spat upon the snow.

The house in question looked dark at first sight; but as Villon made a preliminary inspection in search of the handiest point of attack, a little twinkle of light caught his eye from behind a curtained window.

"The devil!" he thought. "People awake! Some student or some saint, confound the crew! Can't they get drunk and lie in bed snoring like their neighbours! What's the good of curfew, and poor devils of bell-ringers jumping at a rope's end in bell-towers? What's the use of day, if people sit up all night? The gripes to them!" He grinned as he saw where his logic was leading him. "Every man to his business, after all," added he, "and if they're awake, by the Lord, I may come by a supper honestly for once, and cheat the devil."

He went boldly to the door and knocked with an assured hand. On both previous occasions, he had knocked timidly and with some dread of attracting notice; but now when he had just discarded the thought of a burglarious entry, knocking at a door seemed a mighty simple and innocent proceeding. The sound of his blows echoed through the house with thin, phantasmal reverberations, as though it were quite empty; but these had scarcely died away before, a measured tread drew near, a couple of bolts were withdrawn, and one wing was opened broadly, as though no guile or fear of guile were known to those within. A tall figure of a man, muscular and spare, but a little bent, confronted Villon. The head was massive in bulk, but finely sculptured; the nose blunt at the bottom, but refining upward to where it joined a pair of strong and honest eyebrows; the mouth and eyes surrounded with delicate markings, and the whole face based upon a thick white beard, boldly and squarely trimmed. Seen as it was by the light

of a flickering hand-lamp, it looked perhaps nobler than it had a right to do; but it was a fine face, honourable rather than intelligent, strong, simple, and righteous.

"You knock late, sir," said the old man in resonant, courteous tones.

Villon cringed, and brought up many servile words of apology; at a crisis of this sort, the beggar was uppermost in him, and the man of genius hid his head with confusion.

"You are cold," repeated the old man, "and hungry? Well, step in." And he ordered him into the house with a noble enough gesture.

"Some great seigneur," thought Villon, as his host, setting down the lamp on the flagged pavement of the entry, shot the bolts once more into their places.

"You will pardon me if I go in front," he said, when this was done; and he preceded the poet upstairs into a large apartment, warmed with a pan of charcoal and lit by a great lamp hanging from the roof. It was very bare of furniture. Only some gold plate on a sideboard; some folios; and a stand of armour between the windows. Some smart tapestry hung upon the walls, representing the crucifixion of our Lord in one piece, and in another a scene of shepherds and shepherdesses by a running stream. Over the chimney was a shield of arms.

"Will you seat yourself," said the old man, "and forgive me if I leave you? I am alone in my house to-night, and if you are to eat I must forage for you myself."

No sooner was his host gone than Villon leaped from the chair on which he had just seated himself, and began examining the room, with the stealth and passion of a cat. He weighed the gold flagons in his hand, opened all the folios, and investigated the arms upon the shield, and the stuff with which the seats were lined. He raised the window curtains, and saw that the windows were set with rich stained glass in figures, so far as he could see, of martial import. Then he stood in the middle of the room, drew a long breath, and retaining it with puffed cheeks, looked round and round him, turning on his heels, as if to impress every feature of the apartment on his memory.

"Seven pieces of plate," he said. "If there had been ten, I would have risked it. A fine house, and a fine old master, so help me all the saints!"

And just then, hearing the old man's tread returning along the corridor, he stole back to his chair, and began humbly toasting his wet legs before the charcoal pan.

His entertainer had a plate of meat in one hand and a jug of wine in the other. He sat down the plate upon the table, motioning Villon to draw in his chair, and going to the sideboard, brought back two goblets, which he filled.

"I drink your better fortune," he said, gravely touching Villon's cup with his own.

"To our better acquaintance," said the poet, growing bold, A mere man of the people would have been awed by the courtesy of the old seigneur, but Villon was hardened in that matter; he had made mirth for great lords before now, and found them as black rascals as himself. And so he devoted himself to the viands with a ravenous gusto, while the old man, leaning backward, watched him with steady, curious eyes.

"You have blood on your shoulder, my man," he said.

Montigny must have laid his wet right hand upon him as he left the house. He cursed Montigny in his heart.

"It was none of my shedding," he stammered.

"I had not supposed so," returned his host quietly. "A brawl?"

"Well, something of that sort," Villon admitted with a quaver.

"Perhaps a fellow murdered?"

"Oh no, not murdered," said the poet, more and more confused. "It was all fair play—murdered by accident. I had no hand in it, God strike me dead!" he added fervently.

"One rogue the fewer, I dare say," observed the master of the house.

"You may dare to say that," agreed Villon, infinitely relieved. "As big a rogue as there is between here and Jerusalem. He turned up his toes like a lamb. But it was a nasty thing to look at. I dare say you've seen dead men

in your time, my lord?" he added, glancing at the armour.

"Many," said the old man. "I have followed the wars, as you imagine."

Villon laid down his knife and fork, which he had just taken up again.

"Were any of them bald?" he asked.

"Oh yes, and with hair as white as mine."

"I don't think I should mind the white so much," said Villon. "His was red." And he had a return of his shuddering and tendency to laughter, which he drowned with a great draught of wine. "I'm a little put out when I think of it," he went on. "I knew him—damn him! And then the cold gives a man fancies—or the fancies give a man cold, I don't know which."

"Have you any money?" asked the old man.

"I have one white," returned the poet, laughing. "I got it out of a dead jade's stocking in a porch. She was as dead as Cæsar, poor wench, and as cold as a church, with bits of ribbon sticking in her hair. This is a hard world in winter for wolves and wenches and poor rogues like me."

"I," said the old man, "am Enguerrand de la Feuillée, seigneur de Brisetout, bailly du Patatrac. Who and what may you be?"

Villon rose and made a suitable reverence. "I am called Francis Villon," he said, "a poor Master of Arts of this university. I know some Latin, and a deal of vice. I can make chansons, ballades, lais, virelais, and roundels, and I am very fond of wine. I was born in a garret, and I shall not improbably die upon the gallows. I may add, my lord, that from this night forward I am your lordship's very obsequious servant to command."

"No servant of mine," said the knight; "my guest for this evening, and no more."

"A very grateful guest," said Villon, politely, and he drank in dumb show to his entertainer.

"You are shrewd," began the old man, tapping his forehead, "very shrewd; you have learning; you are a clerk; and yet you take a small piece of money off a dead woman in the street. Is it not a kind of theft?"

"It is a kind of theft much practised in the wars, my lord."

"The wars are the field of honour," returned the old man proudly. "There a man plays his life upon the cast; he fights in the name of his lord the king, his Lord God, and all their lordships the holy saints and angels."

"Put it," said Villon, "that I were really a thief, should I not play my life also, and against heavier odds?"

"For gain but not for honour."

"Gain?" repeated Villon with a shrug. "Gain! The poor fellow wants supper, and takes it. So does the soldier in a campaign. Why, what are all these requisitions we hear so much about? If they are not gain to those who take them, they are loss enough to the others. The men-at-arms drink by a good fire, while the burgher bites his nails to buy them wine and wood. I have seen a good many ploughmen swinging on trees about the country; ay, I have seen thirty on one elm, and a very poor figure they made; and when I asked someone how all these came to be hanged, I was told it was because they could not scrape together enough crowns to satisfy the men-at-arms."

"These things are a necessity of war, which the low-born must endure with constancy. It is true that some captains drive overhard; there are spirits in every rank not easily moved by pity; and indeed many follow arms who are no better than brigands."

"You see," said the poet, "you cannot separate the soldier from the brigand; and what is a thief but an isolated brigand with circumspect manners? I steal a couple of mutton chops, without so much as disturbing people's sleep; the farmer grumbles a bit, but sups none the less wholesomely on what remains. You come up blowing gloriously on a trumpet, take away the whole sheep, and beat the farmer pitifully into the bargain. I have no trumpet; I am only Tom, Dick, or Harry; I am a rogue and a dog, and hanging's too good for me—with all my heart; but just ask the farmer which of us he prefers, just find out which of us he lies awake to curse on cold nights."

"Look at us two," said his lordship. "I am old, strong,

and honoured. If I were turned from my house to-morrow, hundreds would be proud to shelter me. Poor people would go out and pass the nights in the streets with their children, if I merely hinted that I wished to be alone. And I find you up, wandering homeless, and picking farthings off dead women by the wayside! I fear no man and nothing; I have seen you tremble and lose countenance at a word. I wait God's summons contentedly in my own house, or, if it please the king to call me again, upon the field of battle. You look for the gallows; a rough, swift death, without hope or honour. Is there no difference between these two?"

"As far as to the moon," Villon acquiesced. "But if I had been born lord of Brisetout, and you had been the poor scholar Francis, would the difference have been any the less? Should not I have been warming my knees at this charcoal pan, and would not you have been groping for farthings in the snow? Should not I have been the soldier, and you the thief?"

"A thief?" cried the old man. "I a thief! If you understood your words, you would repent them."

Villon turned out his hands with a gesture of inimitable impudence. "If your lordship had done me the honour to follow my argument!" he said.

"I do you too much honour in submitting to your presence," said the knight. "Learn to curb your tongue when you speak with old and honourable men, or some one hastier than I may reprove you in a sharper fashion." And he rose and paced the lower end of the apartment, struggling with anger and antipathy. Villon surreptitiously refilled his cup, and settled himself more comfortably in the chair, crossing his knees and leaning his head upon one hand and the elbow against the back of the chair. He was now replete and warm; and he was in nowise frightened for his host, having gauged him as justly as was possible between two such different characters. The night was far spent, and in a very comfortable fashion after all; and he felt morally certain of a safe departure on the morrow.

"Tell me one thing," said the old man, pausing in his walk. "Are you really a thief?"

"I claim the sacred rights of hospitality," returned the poet. "My lord, I am."

"You are very young," the knight continued.

"I should never have been so old," replied Villon, showing his fingers, "if I had not helped myself with these ten talents. They have been my nursing mothers and my nursing fathers."

"You may still repent and change."

"I repent daily," said the poet. "There are few people more given to repentance than poor Francis. As for change, let somebody change my circumstances. A man must continue to eat, if it were only that he may continue to repent."

"The change must begin in the heart," returned the old man solemnly.

"My dear lord," answered Villon, "do you really fancy that I steal for pleasure? I hate stealing, like any other piece of work or of danger. My teeth chatter when I see a gallows. But I must eat, I must drink, I must mix in society of some sort. What the devil! Man is not a solitary animal—*cui Deus fœminam tradit.* Make me king's pantler—make me abbot of St. Denis; make me bailly of the Patatrac; and then I shall be changed indeed. But as long as you leave me the poor scholar Francis Villon, without a farthing, why, of course, I remain the same."

"The grace of God is all-powerful."

"I should be a heretic to question it," said Francis. "It has made you lord of Brisetout and bailly of the Patatrac; it has given me nothing but the quick wits under my hat and these ten toes upon my hands. May I help myself to wine? I thank you respectfully. By God's grace, you have a very superior vintage."

The lord of Brisetout walked to and fro with his hands behind his back. Perhaps he was not yet quite settled in his mind about the parallel between thieves and soldiers; perhaps Villon had interested him by some cross-thread of sympathy; perhaps his wits were simply muddled by so much unfamiliar reasoning; but whatever the cause, he somehow yearned to convert the young man to a better

way of thinking, and could not make up his mind to drive him forth again into the street.

"There is something more than I can understand in this," he said at length. "Your mouth is full of subtleties, and the devil has led you very far astray; but the devil is only a very weak spirit before God's truth, and all his subtleties vanish at a word of true honour, like darkness at morning. Listen to me once more. I learned long ago that a gentleman should live chivalrously and lovingly to God, and the king, and his lady; and though I have seen many strange things done, I have still striven to command my ways upon that rule. It is not only written in all noble histories, but in every man's heart, if he will take care to read. You speak of food and wine, and I know very well that hunger is a difficult trial to endure; but you do not speak of other wants; you say nothing of honour, of faith to God and other men, of courtesy, of love without reproach. It may be that I am not very wise—and yet I think I am—but you seem to me like one who has lost his way and made a great error in life. You are attending to the little wants, and you have totally forgotten the great and only real ones, like a man who should be doctoring toothache on the Judgment Day. For such things as honour and love and faith are not only nobler than food and drink, but indeed I think we desire them more, and suffer more sharply for their absence. I speak to you as I think you will most easily understand me. Are you not, while careful to fill your belly, disregarding another appetite in your heart, which spoils your pleasure and keeps you continually wretched?"

Villon was sensibly nettled under all this sermonising. "You think I have no sense of honour!" he cried. "I'm poor enough, God knows! It's hard to see rich people with their gloves, and you blowing in your hands. An empty belly is a bitter thing, although you speak so lightly of it. If you had had as many as I, perhaps you would change your tune. Any way I'm a thief—make the most of that—but I'm not a devil from hell, God strike me dead. I would have you to know I've an honour of my own, as good as yours, though I don't prate about it all day long, as if it

was a God's miracle to have any. It seems quite natural to me; I keep it in its box till it's wanted. Why now, look you here, how long have I been in this room with you? Did you not tell me you were alone in the house? Look at your gold plate! You're strong, if you like, but you're old and unarmed, and I have my knife. What did I want but a jerk of the elbow and here would have been you with the cold steel in your bowels, and there would have been me, linking in the streets, with an armful of golden cups! Did you suppose I hadn't wit enough to see that? And I scorned the action. There are your damned goblets, as safe as in a church; there are you, with your heart ticking as good as new; and here am I, ready to go out again as poor as I came in, with my one white that you threw in my teeth! And you think I have no sense of honour—God strike me dead!"

The old man stretched out his right arm. "I will tell you what you are," he said. "You are a rogue, my man, an impudent and black-hearted rogue and vagabond. I have passed an hour with you. Oh! believe me, I feel myself disgraced! And you have eaten and drunk at my table. But now I am sick at your presence; the day has come, and the night-bird should be off to his roost. Will you go before, or after?"

"Which you please," returned the poet, rising. "I believe you to be strictly honourable." He thoughtfully emptied his cup. "I wish I could add you were intelligent," he went on, knocking on his head with his knuckles. "Age! age! the brains stiff and rheumatic."

The old man preceded him from a point of self-respect; Villon followed, whistling, with his thumbs in his girdle.

"God pity you," said the lord of Brisetout at the door.

"Good-bye, papa," returned Villon with a yawn. "Many thanks for the cold mutton."

The door closed behind him. The dawn was breaking over the white roofs. A chill, uncomfortable morning ushered in the day. Villon stood and heartily stretched himself.

"A very dull old gentleman," he thought. "I wonder what his goblets may be worth."

THE STAR-CHILD

By Oscar Wilde

To Miss Margot Tennant

ONCE upon a time two poor Woodcutters were making their way home through a great pine-forest. It was winter, and a night of bitter cold. The snow lay thick upon the ground, and upon the branches of the trees; the frost kept snapping the little twigs on either side of them, as they passed; and when they came to the Mountain-Torrent she was hanging motionless in air, for the Ice-King had kissed her.

So cold was it that even the animals and the birds did not know what to make of it.

"Ugh!" snarled the Wolf, as he limped through the brushwood with his tail between his legs, "this is perfectly monstrous weather. Why doesn't the Government look to it?"

"Weet! weet! weet!" twittered the green Linnets, "the old Earth is dead, and they have laid her out in her white shroud."

"The Earth is going to be married, and this is her bridal dress," whispered the Turtle-doves to each other. Their little pink feet were quite frost-bitten, but they felt that it was their duty to take a romantic view of the situation.

"Nonsense!" growled the Wolf. "I tell you that it is all the fault of the Government, and if you don't believe me I shall eat you." The Wolf had a thoroughly practical mind, and was never at a loss for a good argument.

"Well, for my own part," said the Woodpecker who was a born philosopher, "I don't care an atomic theory for explanations. If a thing is so, it is so, and at present it is terribly cold."

Terribly cold it certainly was. The little Squirrels, who lived inside the tall fir-tree, kept rubbing each other's noses to keep themselves warm, and the Rabbits curled themselves up in their holes, and did not venture even to look out of doors. The only people who seemed to enjoy it were the great horned Owls. Their feathers were quite stiff with rime, but they did not mind, and they rolled their large yellow eyes, and called out to each other across the forest, "Tu-whit! Tu-whoo! Tu-whit! Tu-whoo! what delightful weather we are having!"

On and on went the two Woodcutters, blowing lustily upon their fingers, and stamping with their huge iron-shod boots upon the caked snow. Once they sank into a deep drift, and came out as white as millers are, when the stones are grinding; and once they slipped on the hard smooth ice where the marshwater was frozen, and their faggots fell out of their bundles, and they had to pick them up and bind them together again; and once they thought that they had lost their way, and a great terror seized on them, for they knew that the Snow is cruel to those who sleep in her arms. But they put their trust in the good Saint Martin, who watches over all travellers, and retraced their steps, and went warily, and at last they reached the outskirts of the forest, and saw, far down in the valley beneath them, the lights of the village in which they dwelt.

So overjoyed were they at their deliverance that they laughed aloud, and the Earth seemed to them like a flower of silver, and the Moon like a flower of gold.

Yet, after that they had laughed they became sad, for they remembered their poverty, and one of them said to the other, "Why did we make merry, seeing that life is for the rich, and not for such as we are? Better that we had died of cold in the forest, or that some wild beast had fallen upon us and slain us."

"Truly," answered his companion, "much is given to some, and little is given to others. Injustice has parcelled out the world, nor is there equal division of aught save of sorrow."

But as they were bewailing their misery to each other this

strange thing happened. There fell from heaven a very bright and beautiful star. It slipped down the side of the sky, passing by the other stars in its course, and, as they watched it, wondering, it seemed to them to sink behind a clump of willow-trees that stood hard by a little sheepfold no more than a stone's-throw away.

"Why! there is a crock of gold for whoever finds it," they cried, and they set to and ran, so eager were they for the gold.

And one of them ran faster than his mate, and outstripped him, and forced his way through the willows, and came out on the other side, and lo! there was indeed a thing of gold lying on the white snow. So he hastened towards it, and stooping down placed his hands upon it, and it was a cloak of golden tissue, curiously wrought with stars, and wrapped in many folds. And he cried out to his comrade that he had found the treasure that had fallen from the sky, and when his comrade had come up, they sat them down in the snow, and loosened the folds of the cloak that they might divide the pieces of gold. But alas! no gold was in it, nor silver, nor, indeed, treasure of any kind, but only a little child who was asleep.

And one of them said to the other, "This is a bitter ending to our hope, nor have we any good fortune, for what doth a child profit to a man? Let us leave it here, and go our way, seeing that we are poor men, and have children of our own whose bread we may not give to another."

But his companion answered him, "Nay, but it were an evil thing to leave the child to perish here in the snow, and though I am as poor as thou art, and have many mouths to feed, and but little in the pot, yet will I bring it home with me, and my wife shall have care of it."

So very tenderly he took up the child, and wrapped the cloak around it to shield it from the harsh cold, and made his way down the hill to the village, his comrade marvelling much at his foolishness and softness of heart.

And when they came to the village, his comrade said to him, "Thou hast the child, therefore give me the cloak, for it is meet that we should share."

But he answered him, "Nay, for the cloak is neither mine nor thine, but the child's only," and he bade him God-speed, and went to his own house and knocked.

And when his wife opened the door and saw that her husband had returned safe to her, she put her arms around his neck and kissed him, and took from his back the bundle of faggots, and brushed the snow off his boots, and bade him come in.

But he said to her, "I have found something in the forest, and I have brought it to thee to have care of it," and he stirred not from the threshold.

"What is it?" she cried. "Show it to me, for the house is bare, and we have need of many things." And he drew the cloak back, and showed her the sleeping child.

"Alack, goodman!" she murmured, "Have we not children of our own, that thou must needs bring a changeling to sit by the hearth? And who knows if it will not bring us bad fortune? And how shall we tend it?" And she was wroth against him.

"Nay, but it is a Star-Child," he answered; and he told her the strange manner of the finding of it.

But she would not be appeased, but mocked at him, and spoke angrily, and cried, "Our children lack bread, and shall we feed the child of another? Who is there who careth for us? And who giveth us food?"

"Nay, but God careth for the sparrows even, and feedeth them," he answered.

"Do not the sparrows die of hunger in the winter?" she asked. "And is it not winter now?" And the man answered nothing, but stirred not from the threshold.

And a bitter wind from the forest came in through the open door, and made her tremble, and she shivered, and said to him, "Wilt thou not close the door? There cometh a bitter wind into the house, and I am cold."

"Into a house where a heart is hard cometh there not always a bitter wind?" he asked. And the woman answered him nothing, but crept closer to the fire.

And after a time she turned round and looked at him, and her eyes were full of tears. And he came in swiftly,

and placed the child in her arms, and she kissed it, and laid it in a little bed where the youngest of their own children was lying. And on the morrow the Woodcutter took the curious cloak of gold and placed it in a great chest, and a chain of amber that was round the child's neck his wife took and set it in the chest also.

So the Star-Child was brought up with the children of the Woodcutter, and sat at the same board with them, and was their playmate. And every year he became more beautiful to look at, so that all those who dwelt in the village were filled with wonder, for, while they were swarthy and black-haired, he was white and delicate as sawn ivory, and his curls were like the rings of the daffodil. His lips, also, were like the petals of a red flower, and his eyes were like violets by a river of pure water, and his body like the narcissus of a field where the mower comes not.

Yet did his beauty work him evil. For he grew proud, and cruel, and selfish. The children of the Woodcutter, and the other children of the village, he despised, saying that they were of mean parentage, while he was noble, being sprung from a Star, and he made himself master over them, and called them his servants. No pity had he for the poor, or for those who were blind or maimed or in any way afflicted, but would cast stones at them and drive them forth on to the highway, and bid them beg their bread elsewhere, so that none save the outlaws came twice to that village to ask for alms. Indeed, he was as one enamoured of beauty, and would mock at the weakly and ill-favoured, and make jest of them; and himself he loved, and in summer, when the winds were still, he would lie by the well in the priest's orchard and look down at the marvel of his own face, and laugh for the pleasure he had in his fairness.

Often did the Woodcutter and his wife chide him, and say, "We did not deal with thee as thou dealest with those who are left desolate, and have none to succour them. Wherefore art thou so cruel to all who need pity?"

Often did the old priest send for him, and seek to teach

him the love of living things, saying to him, "The fly is thy brother. Do it no harm. The wild birds that roam through the forest have their freedom. Snare them not for thy pleasure. God made the blind-worm and the mole, and each has its place. Who art thou to bring pain into God's world? Even the cattle of the field praise Him."

But the Star-Child heeded not their words, but would frown and flout, and go back to his companions, and lead them. And his companions followed him, for he was fair, and fleet of foot, and could dance, and pipe, and make music. And wherever the Star-Child led them they followed, and whatever the Star-Child bade them do, that did they. And when he pierced with a sharp reed the dim eyes of the mole, they laughed, and when he cast stones at the leper they laughed also. And in all things he ruled them, and they became hard of heart even as he was.

Now there passed one day through the village a poor beggar-woman. Her garments were torn and ragged, and her feet were bleeding from the rough road on which she had travelled, and she was in very evil plight. And being weary she sat her down under a chestnut-tree to rest.

But when the Star-Child saw her he said to his companions, "See! There sitteth a foul beggar-woman under that fair and green-leaved tree. Come, let us drive her hence, for she is ugly and ill-favoured."

So he came near and threw stones at her, and mocked her, and she looked at him with terror in her eyes, nor did she move her gaze from him. And when the Woodcutter, who was cleaving logs in a haggard hard by, saw what the Star-Child was doing, he ran up and rebuked him, and said to him, "Surely thou art hard of heart and knowest not mercy, for what evil has this poor woman done to thee that thou shouldst treat her in this wise?"

And the Star-Child grew red with anger, and stamped his foot upon the ground, and said, "Who art thou to question me what I do? I am no son of thine to do thy bidding."

"Thou speakest truly," answered the Woodcutter, "yet

did I show thee pity when I found thee in the forest."

And when the woman heard these words she gave a loud cry, and fell into a swoon. And the Woodcutter carried her to his own house, and his wife had care of her, and when she rose up from the swoon into which she had fallen, they set meat and drink before her, and bade her have comfort.

But she would neither eat nor drink, but said to the Woodcutter, "Didst thou not say that the child was found in the forest? And was it not ten years from this day?"

And the Woodcutter answered, "Yea, it was in the forest that I found him, and it is ten years from this day."

"And what signs dist thou find with him?" she cried. "Bare he not upon his neck a chain of amber? Was not round him a cloak of gold tissue broidered with stars?"

"Truly," answered the Woodcutter, "it was even as thou sayest." And he took the cloak and the amber chain from the chest where they lay, and showed them to her.

And when she saw them she wept for joy, and said, "He is my little son whom I lost in the forest. I pray thee send for him quickly, for in search of him have I wandered over the whole world."

So the Woodcutter and his wife went out and called to the Star-Child, and said to him, "Go into the house, and there shalt thou find thy mother, who is waiting for thee."

So he ran in, filled with wonder and great gladness. But when he saw her who was waiting there, he laughed scornfully and said, "Why where is my mother? For I see none here but this vile beggar-woman."

And the woman answered him, "I am thy mother."

"Thou art mad to say so," cried the Star-Child angrily. "I am no son of thine, for thou art a beggar, and ugly, and in rags. Therefore get thee hence, and let me see thy foul face no more."

"Nay, but thou art indeed my little son, whom I bare in the forest," she cried, and she fell on her knees, and held out her arms to him. "The robbers stole thee from me, and left thee to die," she murmured, "but I recognised thee when I saw thee, and the signs also have I rec-

ognised, the cloak of golden tissue and the amber chain. Therefore I pray thee come with me, for over the whole world have I wandered in search of thee. Come with me, my son, for I have need of thy love."

But the Star-Child stirred not from his place, but shut the doors of his heart against her, nor was there any sound heard save the sound of the woman weeping for pain.

And at last he spoke to her, and his voice was hard and bitter. "If in very truth thou art my mother," he said, "it had been better hadst thou stayed away, and not come here to bring me to shame, seeing that I thought I was the child of some Star, and not a beggar's child, as thou tellest me that I am. Therefore get thee hence, and let me see thee no more."

"Alas! my son," she cried, "wilt thou not kiss me before I go? For I have suffered much to find thee."

"Nay," said the Star-Child, "but thou art too foul to look at, and rather would I kiss the adder or the toad than thee."

So the woman rose up and went away into the forest weeping bitterly, and when the Star-Child saw that she had gone, he was glad, and ran back to his playmates that he might play with them.

But when they beheld him coming, they mocked him and said, "Why, thou art as foul as the toad, and as loathsome as the adder. Get thee hence, for we will not suffer thee to play with us," and they drove him out of the garden.

And the Star-Child frowned and said to himself, "What is this that they say to me? I will go to the well of water and look into it, and it shall tell me of my beauty."

So he went to the well of water and looked into it, and lo! his face was as the face of a toad, and his body was scaled like an adder. And he flung himself down on the grass and wept, and said to himself, "Surely this has come upon me by reason of my sin. For I have denied my mother, and driven her away, and been proud and cruel to her. Wherefore I will go and seek her through the whole world, nor will I rest till I have found her."

And there came to him the little daughter of the Wood-cutter, and she put her hand upon his shoulder and said, "What doth it matter if thou hast lost thy comeliness? Stay with us, and I will not mock at thee."

And he said to her, "Nay, but I have been cruel to my mother, and as a punishment has this evil been sent to me. Wherefore I must go hence, and wander through the world till I find her, and she give me her forgiveness."

So he ran away into the forest and called out to his mother to come to him, but there was no answer. All day long he called to her, and when the sun set he lay down to sleep on a bed of leaves and the birds and the animals fled from him, for they remembered his cruelty, and he was alone save for the toad that watched him, and the slow adder that crawled past.

And in the morning he rose up, and plucked some bitter berries from the trees and ate them, and took his way through the great wood, weeping sorely. And of everything that he met he made inquiry if perchance they had seen his mother.

He said to the Mole, "Thou canst go beneath the earth. Tell me, is my mother there?"

And the Mole answered, "Thou hast blinded mine eyes. How should I know?"

He said to the Linnet, "Thou canst fly over the tops of the tall trees, and canst see the whole world. Tell me, canst thou see my mother?"

And the Linnet answered, "Thou hast clipt my wings for thy pleasure. How should I fly?

And to the little Squirrel who lived in the fir-tree, and was lonely, he said, "Where is my mother?"

And the Squirrel answered, "Thou hast slain mine. Dost thou seek to slay thine also?"

And the Star-Child wept and bowed his head, and prayed forgiveness of God's things, and went on through the forest seeking for the beggar-woman. And on the third day he came to the other side of the forest and went down into the plain.

And when he passed through the villages the children mocked him, and threw stones at him, and the carlots would not suffer him even to sleep in the byres lest he might bring mildew on the stored corn, so foul was he to look at, and their hired men drove him away, and there was none who had pity on him. Nor could he hear anywhere of the beggar-woman who was his mother, though for the space of three years he wandered over the world, and often seemed to see her on the road in front of him, and would call to her, and run after her till the sharp flints made his feet to bleed. But overtake her he could not, and those who dwelt by the way did ever deny that they had seen her, or any like to her, and they made sport of his sorrow.

For the space of three years he wandered over the world, and in the world there was neither love nor loving-kindness nor charity for him, but it was even such a world as he had made for himself in the days of his great pride.

And one evening he came to the gate of a strong-walled city that stood by a river, and, weary and footsore though he was, he made to enter in. But the soldiers who stood on guard dropped their halberds across the entrance, and said roughly to him, "What is thy business in the city?"

"I am seeking for my mother," he answered, "and I pray ye to suffer me to pass, for it may be that she is in this city."

But they mocked at him, and one of them wagged a black beard, and set down his shield and cried, "Of a truth, thy mother will not be merry when she sees thee, for thou art more ill-favoured than the toad of the marsh, or the adder that crawls in the fen. Get thee gone. Thy mother dwells not in this city."

And another, who held a yellow banner in his hand, said to him, "Who is thy mother, and wherefore art thou seeking for her?"

And he answered, "My mother is a beggar even as I am, and I have treated her evilly, and I pray ye to suffer me to pass that she may give me her forgiveness, if it be

that she tarrieth in this city." But they would not, and pricked him with their spears.

And, as he turned away weeping, one whose armour was inlaid with gilt flowers, and on whose helmet crouched a lion that had wings, came up and made inquiry of the soldiers who it was who had sought entrance. And they said to him, "It is a beggar and the child of a beggar, and we have driven him away."

"Nay," he cried, laughing, "but we will sell the foul thing for a slave, and his price shall be the price of a bowl of sweet wine."

And an old and evil-visaged man who was passing by called out, and said, "I will buy him for that price," and, when he had paid the price, he took the Star-Child by the hand and led him into the city.

And after they had gone through many streets they came to a little door that was set in a wall that was covered with a pomegranate tree. And the old man touched the door with a ring of graved jasper and it opened, and they went down five steps of brass into a garden filled with black poppies and green jars of burnt clay. And the old man took then from his turban a scarf of figured silk, and bound with it the eyes of the Star-Child, and drove him in front of him. And when the scarf was taken off his eyes, the Star-Child found himself in a dungeon, that was lit by a lantern of horn.

And the old man set before him some mouldy bread on a trencher and said, "Eat," and some brackish water in a cup and said "Drink," and when he had eaten and drunk, the old man went out, locking the door behind him and fastening it with an iron chain.

And on the morrow the old man, who was indeed the subtlest of the magicians of Libya and had learned his art from one who dwelt in the tombs of the Nile, came in to him and frowned at him, and said, "In a wood that is nigh to the gate of this city of Giaours there are three pieces of gold. One is of white gold, and another is of yellow gold, and the gold of the third one is red. To-day

thou shalt bring me the piece of white gold, and if thou bringest it not back, I will beat thee with a hundred stripes. Get thee away quickly, and at sunset I will be waiting for thee at the door of the garden. See that thou bringest the white gold, or it shall go ill with thee, for thou art my slave, and I have bought thee for the price of a bowl of sweet wine." And he bound the eyes of the Star-Child with the scarf of figured silk, and led him through the house, and through the garden of poppies, and up the five steps of brass. And having opened the little door with his ring he set him in the street.

And the Star-Child went out of the gate of the city, and came to the wood of which the Magician had spoken to him.

Now this wood was very fair to look at from without, and seemed full of singing birds and of sweet-scented flowers, and the Star-Child entered it gladly. Yet did its beauty profit him little, for wherever he went harsh briars and thorns shot up from the ground and encompassed him, and evil nettles stung him, and the thistle pierced him with her daggers, so that he was in sore distress. Nor could he find anywhere the piece of white gold of which the Magician had spoken, though he sought for it from morn to noon, and from noon to sunset. And at sunset he set his face towards home, weeping bitterly, for he knew what fate was in store for him.

But when he had reached the outskirts of the wood, he heard from a thicket a cry as of some one in pain. And forgetting his own sorrow he ran back to the place, and saw there a little Hare caught in a trap that some hunter had set for it.

And the Star-Child had pity on it, and released it, and said to it, "I am myself but a slave, yet may I give thee thy freedom."

And the Hare answered him, and said, "Surely thou hast given me freedom, and what shall I give thee in return?"

And the Star-Child said to it, "I am seeking for a piece of white gold, nor can I anywhere find it, and if I bring it not to my master he will beat me."

"Come thou with me," said the Hare, "and I will lead thee to it, for I know where it is hidden, and for what purpose."

So the Star-Child went with the Hare, and lo! in the cleft of a great oak-tree he saw the piece of white gold that he was seeking. And he was filled with joy, and seized it, and said to the Hare, "The service that I did to thee thou hast rendered back again many times over, and the kindness that I showed thee thou hast repaid a hundred-fold."

"Nay," answered the Hare, "but as thou dealt with me, so I did deal with thee," and it ran away swiftly, and the Star-Child went towards the city.

Now at the gate of the city there was seated one who was a leper. Over his face hung a cowl of grey linen, and through the eyelets his eyes gleamed like red coals. And when he saw the Star-Child coming, he struck upon a wooden bowl, and clattered his bell, and called out to him, and said, "Give me a piece of money, or I must die of hunger. For they have thrust me out of the city, and there is no one who has pity on me."

"Alas!" cried the Star-Child, "I have but one piece of money in my wallet, and if I bring it not to my master he will beat me, for I am his slave."

But the leper entreated him, and prayed of him, till the Star-Child had pity, and gave him the piece of white gold.

And when he came to the Magician's house, the Magician opened to him, and brought him in, and said to him, "Hast thou the piece of white gold?" And the Star-Child answered, "I have it not." So the Magician fell upon him, and beat him, and set before him an empty trencher, and said "Eat," and an empty cup, and said "Drink," and flung him again into the dungeon.

And on the morrow the Magician came to him, and said, "If to-day thou bringest me not the piece of yellow gold, I will surely keep thee as my slave, and give thee three hundred stripes."

So the Star-Child went to the wood, and all day long he searched for the piece of yellow gold, but nowhere could he find it. And at sunset he sat him down and began to

weep, and as he was weeping there came to him the little Hare that he had rescued from the trap.

And the Hare said to him, "'Why art thou weeping? And what dost thou seek in the wood?"

And the Star-Child answered, "I am seeking for a piece of yellow gold that is hidden here, and if I find it not my master will beat me, and keep me as a slave."

"Follow me," cried the Hare, and it ran through the wood till it came to a pool of water. And at the bottom of the pool the piece of yellow gold was lying.

"How shall I thank thee?" said the Star-Child, "for lo! this is the second time that you have succoured me."

"Nay, but thou hadst pity on me first," said the Hare, and it ran away swiftly.

And the Star-Child took the piece of yellow gold, and put it in his wallet, and hurried to the city. But the leper saw him coming, and ran to meet him, and knelt down and cried, "Give me a piece of money or I shall die of hunger."

And the Star-Child said to him, "I have in my wallet but one piece of yellow gold, and if I bring it not to my master he will beat me and keep me as his slave."

But the leper entreated him sore, so that the Star-Child had pity on him, and gave him the piece of yellow gold.

And when he came to the Magician's house, the Magician opened to him, and brought him in, and said to him, "Hast thou the piece of yellow gold?" And the Star-Child said to him, "I have it not." So the Magician fell upon him, and beat him, and loaded him with chains, and cast him again into the dungeon.

And on the morrow the Magician came to him, and said, "If to-day thou bringest me the piece of red gold I will set thee free, but if thou bringest it not I will surely slay thee."

So the Star-Child went to the wood, and all day long he searched for the piece of red gold, but nowhere could he find it. And at evening he sat him down and wept, and as he was weeping there came to him the little Hare.

And the Hare said to him, "The piece of red gold that

thou seekest is in the cavern that is behind thee. Therefore weep no more, but be glad."

"How shall I reward thee?" cried the Star-Child, "for lo! this is the third time thou hast succoured me."

"Nay, but thou hadst pity on me first," said the Hare, and it ran away swiftly.

And the Star-Child entered the cavern, and in its farthest corner he found the piece of red gold. So he put it in his wallet, and hurried to the city. And the leper seeing him coming, stood in the centre of the road and cried out, and said to him, "Give me the piece of red money, or I must die," and the Star-Child had pity on him again, and gave him the piece of red gold, saying, "Thy need is greater than mine." Yet was his heart heavy, for he knew what evil fate awaited him.

But lo! as he passed through the gate of the city, the guards bowed down and made obeisance to him, saying, "How beautiful is our lord!" and a crowd of citizens followed him, and cried out, "Surely there is none so beautiful in the whole world!" so that the Star-Child wept, and said to himself, "They are mocking me, and making light of my misery." And so large was the concourse of the people, that he lost the threads of his way, and found himself at last in a great square, in which there was a palace of a King.

And the gate of the palace opened, and the priests and the high officers of the city ran forth to meet him, and they abased themselves before him, and said, "Thou art our lord for whom we have been waiting, and the son of our King."

And the Star-Child answered them and said, "I am no king's son, but the child of a poor beggar-woman. And how say ye that I am beautiful, for I know that I am evil to look at?"

Then he whose armour was inlaid with gilt flowers, and on whose helmet crouched a lion that had wings, held up a shield, and cried, "How saith my lord that he is not beautiful?"

And the Star-Child looked, and lo! his face was even

as it had been, and his comeliness had come back to him, and he saw that in his eyes which he had not seen there before.

And the priests and the high officers knelt down and said to him, "It was prophesied of old that on this day should come he who was to rule over us. Therefore, let our lord take this crown and this sceptre, and be in his justice and mercy our King over us."

But he said to them, "I am not worthy, for I have denied the mother who bare me, nor may I rest till I have found her, and known her forgiveness. Therefore, let me go, for I must wander again over the world, and may not tarry here, though ye bring me the crown and the sceptre." And as he spake he turned his face from them towards the street that led to the gate of the city, and lo! amongst the crowd that pressed round the soldiers, he saw the beggar-woman who was his mother, and at her side stood the leper who had sat by the road.

And a cry of joy broke from his lips, and he ran over, and kneeling down he kissed the wounds on his mother's feet, and wet them with his tears. He bowed his head in the dust, and sobbing, as one whose heart might break, he said to her, "Mother, I denied thee in the hour of my pride. Accept me in the hour of my humility. Mother, I gave thee hatred. Do thou give me love. Mother, I rejected thee. Receive thy child now." But the beggar-woman answered him not a word.

And he reached out his hands and clasped the white feet of the leper, and said to him, "Thrice did I give thee of my mercy. Bid my mother speak to me once." But the leper answered him not a word.

And he sobbed again and said, "Mother, my suffering is greater than I can bear. Give me thy forgiveness, and let me go back to the forest." And the beggar-woman put her hand on his head, and said to him, "Rise," and the leper put his hand on his head, and said to him, "Rise," also.

And he rose up from his feet, and looked at them, and lo! they were a King and a Queen.

And the Queen said to him, "This is thy father whom thou hast succoured."

And the King said, "This is thy mother whose feet thou hast washed with thy tears."

And they fell on his neck and kissed him, and brought him into the palace and clothed him in fair raiment, and set the crown upon his head, and the sceptre in his hand, and over the city that stood by the river he ruled, and was its lord. Much justice and mercy did he show to all, and the evil Magician he banished, and to the Woodcutter and his wife he sent many rich gifts, and to their children he gave high honour. Nor would he suffer any to be cruel to bird or beast, but taught love and loving-kindness and charity, and to the poor he gave bread, and to the naked he gave raiment, and there was peace and plenty in the land.

Yet ruled he not long, so great had been his suffering, and so bitter the fire of his testing, for after the space of three years he died. And he who came after him ruled evilly.

THE DYING OF FRANCIS DONNE

A Study

By Ernest Dowson

"Memento homo, quia pulvis es et in pulverem reverteris."

I

HE had lived so long in the meditation of death, visited it so often in others, studied it with such persistency, with a sentiment in which horror and fascination mingled; but it had always been, as it were, an objective, alien fact, remote from himself and his own life. So that it was in a sudden flash, quite too stupefying to admit in the first instance of terror, that knowledge of his mortality dawned on him. There was absurdity in the idea too.

"I, Francis Donne, thirty-five and some months old, am going to die," he said to himself; and fantastically he looked at his image in the glass, and sought, but quite vainly, to find some change in it which should account for this incongruity, just as, searching in his analytical habit into the recesses of his own mind, he could find no such alteration of his inner consciousness as would explain or justify his plain conviction. And quickly, with reason and casuistry, he sought to rebut that conviction.

The quickness of his mind—it had never seemed to him so nimble, so exquisite a mechanism of syllogism and deduction—was contraposed against his blind instinct of the would-be self-deceiver, in a conflict to which the latter brought something of desperation, the fierce, agonized desperation of a hunted animal at bay. But piece by piece the chain of evidence was strengthened. That subtile and agile mind of his, with its special knowledge, cut clean through the shrinking protests of instinct, removing them

as surely and as remorselessly, he reflected in the image most natural to him, as the keen blade of his surgical knives had removed malignant ulcers.

"I, Francis Donne, am going to die," he repeated, and, presently, "*I am going to die soon;* in a few months, in six perhaps, certainly in a year."

Once more, curiously, but this time with a sense of neutrality, as he had often diagnosed a patient, he turned to the mirror. Was it his fancy, or, perhaps, only for the vague light that he seemed to discover a strange grey tone about his face?

But he had always been a man of a very sallow complexion.

There were a great many little lines, like pen-scratches, scarring the parchment-like skin beneath the keen eyes: doubtless, of late, these had multiplied, become more noticeable, even when his face was in repose.

But, of late, what with his growing practice, his lectures, his writing; all the unceasing labour, which his ambitions entailed, might well have aged him somewhat. That dull, immutable pain, which had first directed his attention from his studies, his investigatons, his profession, to his corporal self, the actual Francis Donne, that pain which he would so gladly have called inexplicable, but could explain so precisely, had ceased for the moment. Nerves, fancies! How long it was since he had taken any rest! He had often intended to give himself holiday, but something had always intervened. But he would do so now, yes, almost immediately; a long, long holiday—he would grudge nothing—somewhere quite out of the way, somewhere, where there was fishing; in Wales, or perhaps in Brittany; that would surely set him right.

And even while he promised himself this necessary relaxation in the immediate future, as he started on his afternoon round, in the background of his mind there lurked the knowledge of its futility; rest, relaxation, all that, at this date was, as it were, some tardy sacrifice, almost hypocritical, which he offered to powers who might not be propitiated.

Once in his neat brougham, the dull pain began again; but by an effort of will he put it away from him. In the brief interval from house to house—he had some dozen visits to make—he occupied himself with a medical paper, glanced at the notes of a lecture he was giving that evening at a certain Institute on the "Limitations of Medicine."

He was late, very late for dinner, and his man, Bromgrove, greeted him with a certain reproachfulness, in which he traced, or seemed to trace, a half-patronizing sense of pity. He reminded himself that on more than one occasion, of late, Bromgrove's manner had perplexed him. He was glad to rebuke the man irritably on some pretext, to dismiss him from the room, and he hurried, without appetite, through the cold or overdone food which was the reward of his tardiness.

His lecture over, he drove out to South Kensington, to attend a reception at the house of a great man—great not only in the scientific world, but also in the world of letters. There was some of the excitement of success in his eyes as he made his way, with smiles and bows, in acknowledgment of many compliments, through the crowded rooms. For Francis Donne's lectures—those of them which were not entirely for the initiated—had grown into the importance of a social function. They had almost succeeded in making science fashionable, clothing its dry bones in a garment of so elegantly literary a pattern. But even in the ranks of the profession it was only the envious, the unsuccessful, who ventured to say that Donne had sacrificed doctrine to popularity, that his science was, in their contemptuous parlance, "mere literature."

Yes, he had been very successful, as the world counts success, and his consciousness of this fact, and the influence of the lights, the crowd, the voices, was like absinthe on his tired spirit. He had forgotten, or thought he had forgotten, the phantom of the last few days, the phantom which was surely waiting for him at home.

But he was reminded by a certain piece of news which late in the evening fluttered the now diminished assembly: the quite sudden death of an eminent surgeon, expected

there that night, an acquaintance of his own, and more or less of each one of the little, intimate group which tarried to discuss it. With sympathy, with a certain awe, they spoke of him, Donne and the others; and both the awe and the sympathy were genuine.

But as he drove home, leaning back in his carriage, in a discouragement, in a lethargy, which was only partly due to physical reaction, he saw visibly underneath their regret —theirs and his own—the triumphant assertion of life, the egoism of instinct. They were sorry, but oh, they were glad! royally glad, that it was another, and not they themselves whom something mysterious had of a sudden snatched away from his busy career, his interests, perhaps from all intelligence; at least, from all the pleasant sensuousness of life, the joy of the visible world, into darkness. And he knew the sentiment, and honestly dared not blame it. How many times had not he, Francis Donne himself, experienced it, that egoistic assertion of life in the presence of the dead—the poor, irremediable dead?. . . And now, he was only good to give it to others.

Latterly, he had been in the habit of subduing sleeplessness with injections of morphia, indeed in infinitesimal quantities. But to-night, although he was more than usually restless and awake, by a strong effort of reasonableness he resisted his impulse to take out the little syringe. The pain was at him again with the same dull and stupid insistence; in its monotony, losing some of the nature of pain and becoming a mere nervous irritation. But he was aware that it would not continue like that. Daily, almost hourly, it would gather strength and cruelty; the moments of respite from it would become rarer, would cease. From a dull pain it would become an acute pain, and then a torture, and then an agony, and then a madness. And in those last days, what peace might be his would be the peace of morphia, so that it was essential that, for the moment, he should not abuse the drug.

And as he knew that sleep was far away from him, he propped himself up with two pillows, and by the light of a strong reading-lamp settled himself to read. He had se-

lected the work of a distinguished German *savant* upon the cardial functions, and a short treatise of his own, which was covered with recent annotations, in his crabbed handwriting, upon "Aneurism of the Heart." He read avidly, and against his own deductions, once more his instinct raised a vain protest. At last he threw the volumes aside, and lay, with his eyes shut, without, however, extinguishing the light. A terrible sense of helplessness overwhelmed him; he was seized with an immense and heart-breaking pity for poor humanity as personified in himself; and, for the first time since he had ceased to be a child, he shed puerile tears.

II

The faces of his acquaintance, the faces of the students at his lectures, the faces of Francis Donne's colleagues at the hospital, were altered; were, at least, sensibly altered to his morbid self-consciousness. In every one whom he encountered, he detected, or fancied that he detected, an attitude of evasion, a hypocritical air of ignoring a fact that was obvious and unpleasant. Was it so obvious, then, the hidden horror which he carried incessantly about with him? Was his secret, which he would still guard so jealously, become a byword and an anecdote in his little world? And a great rage consumed him against the inexorable and inscrutable forces which had made him to destroy him; against himself, because of his proper impotence; and, above all, against the living, the millions who would remain when he was no longer, the living, of whom many would regret him (some of them his personality, and more, his skill), because he could see under all the unconscious hypocrisy of their sorrow, the exultant self-satisfaction of their survival.

And with his burning sense of helplessness, of a certain bitter injustice in things, a sense of shame mingled; all the merely physical dishonour of death shaping itself to his sick and morbid fancy into a violent symbol of what was, as it were, an actually *moral* or intellectual dishonour. Was not

death, too, inevitable and natural an operation as it was, essentially a process to undergo apart and hide jealously, as much as other natural and ignoble processes of the body?

And the animal, who steals away to an uttermost place in the forest, who gives up his breath in a solitude and hides his dying like a shameful thing,—might he not offer an example that it would be well for the dignity of poor humanity to follow?

Since Death is coming to me, said Francis Donne to himself, let me meet it, a stranger in a strange land, with only strange faces round me and the kind indifference of strangers, instead of the intolerable pity of friends.

III

On the bleak and wave-tormented coast of Finistère, somewhere between Quiberon and Fouesnant, he reminded himself of a little fishing-village: a few scattered houses (one of them being an *auberge* at which ten years ago he had spent a night), collected round a poor little grey church. Thither Francis Donne went, without leave-takings or explanation, almost secretly, giving but the vaguest indications of the length or direction of his absence. And there for many days he dwelt, in the cottage which he had hired, with one old Breton woman for his sole attendant, in a state of mind which, after all the years of energy, of ambitious labour, was almost peace.

Bleak and grey it had been, when he had visited it of old, in the late autumn; but now the character, the whole colour of the country was changed. It was brilliant with the promise of summer, and the blue Atlantic, which in winter churned with its long crested waves so boisterously below the little white light-house, which warned mariners (alas! so vainly), against the shark-like cruelty of the rocks, now danced and glittered in the sunshine, rippled with feline caresses round the hulls of the fishing-boats whose brown sails floated so idly in the faint air.

Above the village, on a grassy slope, whose green was almost lurid, Francis Donne lay, for many silent hours, look-

ing out at the placid sea, which could yet be so ferocious, at the low violet line of the Island of Groix, which alone interrupted the monotony of sky and ocean.

He had brought many books with him but he read in them rarely; and when physical pain gave him a respite for thought, he thought almost of nothing. His thought was for a long time a lethargy and a blank.

Now and again he spoke with some of the inhabitants. They were a poor and hardy, but a kindly race: fishers and the wives of fishers, whose children would grow up and become fishermen and the wives of fishermen in their turn. Most of them had wrestled with death; it was always so near to them that hardly one of them feared it; they were fatalists, with the grim and resigned fatalism of the poor, of the poor who live with the treachery of the sea.

Francis Donne visited the little cemetery, and counted the innumerable crosses which testified to the havoc which the sea had wrought. Some of the graves were nameless; holding the bodies of strange seamen which the waves had tossed ashore.

"And in a little time I shall lie here," he said to himself; "and here as well as elsewhere," he added with a shrug, assuming, and, for once, almost sincerely, the stoicism of his surroundings, "and as lief to-day as to-morrow."

On the whole, the days were placid; there were even moments when, as though he had actually drunk in renewed vigour from that salt sea air, the creative force of the sun, he was tempted to doubt his grievous knowledge, to make fresh plans of life. But these were fleeting moments, and the reaction from them was terrible. Each day his hold on life was visibly more slender, and the people of the village saw, and with a rough sympathy, which did not offend him, allowed him to perceive that they saw, the rapid growth and the inevitableness of his end.

IV

But if the days were not without their pleasantness, the nights were always horrible—a torture of the body and an

agony of the spirit. Sleep was far away, and the brain, which had been lulled till the evening, would awake, would grow electric with life and take strange and abominable flights into the darkness of the pit, into the black night of the unknowable and the unknown.

And interminably, during those nights which seemed eternity, Francis Donne questioned and examined into the nature of that Thing, which stood, a hooded figure beside his bed, with a menacing hand raised to beckon him so peremptorily from all that lay within his consciousness.

He had been all his life absorbed in science; he had dissected, how many bodies? and in what anatomy had he ever found a soul? Yet if his avocations, his absorbing interest in physical phenomena had made him somewhat a materialist, it had been almost without his consciousness. The sensible, visible world of matter had loomed so large to him, that merely to know that had seemed to him sufficient. All that might conceivably lie outside it, he had, without negation, been content to regard as outside his province.

And now, in his weakness, in the imminence of approaching dissolution, his purely physical knowledge seemed but a vain possession, and he turned with a passionate interest to what had been said and believed from time immemorial by those who had concentrated their intelligence on that strange essence, which might after all be the essence of one's personality, which might be that sublimated consciousness—the Soul—actually surviving the infamy of the grave?

> Animula, vagula, blandula!
> Hospes comesque corporis,
> Quæ nunc abibis in loca?
> Pallidula, rigida, nudula.

Ah, the question! It was an harmony, perhaps (as, who had maintained? whom the Platonic Socrates in the "Phaedo" had not too successfully refuted), an harmony of life, which was dissolved when life was over? Or, perhaps, as how many metaphysicians had held both before and after a sudden great hope, perhaps too generous to be true,

had changed and illuminated, to countless millions, the inexorable figure of Death—a principle, indeed, immortal, which came and went, passing through many corporal conditions until it was ultimately resolved into the great mind, pervading all things? Perhaps? . . . But what scanty consolation, in all such theories, to the poor body, racked with pain and craving peace, to the tortured spirit of self-consciousness so achingly anxious not to be lost.

And he turned from these speculations to what was, after all, a possibility like the others; the faith of the simple, of these fishers with whom he lived, which was also the faith of his own childhood, which, indeed, he had never repudiated, whose practices he had simply discarded, as one discards puerile garments when one comes to man's estate. And he remembered, with the vividness with which, in moments of great anguish, one remembers things long ago familiar, forgotten though they may have been for years, the triumphant declarations of the Church:

"Omnes quidem resurgemus, sed non omnes immutabimur. In momento, in ictu oculi, in novissima tuba: canet enim tuba: et mortui resurgent incorrupti, et nos immutabimur. Oportet enim corruptibile hoc induere immortalitatem. Cum autem mortale hoc induerit immortalitatem tunc fiet sermo qui scriptus est: Absorpta est mors in victoria. Ubi est, mors, victoria tua? Ubi est, mors, stimulus tuus?"

Ah, for the certitude of that! of that victorious confutation of the apparent destruction of sense and spirit in a common ruin. . . . But it was a possibility like the rest; and had it not more need than the rest to be more than a possibility, if it would be a consolation, in that it promised more? And he gave it up, turning his face to the wall, lay very still, imagining himself already stark and cold, his eyes closed, his jaw closely tied (lest the ignoble changes which had come to him should be too ignoble), while he waited until the narrow boards, within which he should lie, had been nailed together, and the bearers were ready to convey him into the corruption which was to be his part.

And as the window-pane grew light with morning, he sank into a drugged, unrestful sleep, from which he would awake some hours later with eyes more sunken and more haggard cheeks. And that was the pattern of many nights.

V

One day he seemed to wake from a night longer and more troubled than usual, a night which had, perhaps, been many nights and days, perhaps even weeks; a night of an ever-increasing agony, in which he was only dimly conscious at rare intervals of what was happening, or of the figures coming and going around his bed: the doctor from a neighbouring town, who had stayed by him unceasingly, easing his paroxysms with the little merciful syringe; the soft, practised hands of a sister of charity about his pillow; even the face of Bromgrove, for whom doubtless he had sent, when he had foreseen the utter helplessness which was at hand.

He opened his eyes, and seemed to discern a few blurred figures against the darkness of the closed shutters through which one broad ray filtered in; but he could not distinguish their faces, and he closed his eyes once more. An immense and ineffable tiredness had come over him, but the pain—oh, miracle! had ceased. . . . And it suddenly flashed over him that this—*this* was Death; this was the thing against which he had cried and revolted; the horror from which he would have escaped; this utter luxury of physical exhaustion, this calm, this release.

The corporal capacity of smiling had passed from him, but he would fain have smiled.

And for a few minutes of singular mental lucidity, all his life flashed before him in a new relief; his childhood, his adolescence, the people whom he had known; his mother, who had died when he was a boy, of a malady from which, perhaps, a few years later, his skill had saved her; the friend of his youth who had shot himself for so little reason; the girl whom he had loved, but who had not loved him. . . . All that was distorted in life was adjusted and justified in the light of his sudden knowledge. *Beati mor-*

tui . . . and then the great tiredness swept over him once more, and a fainter consciousness, in which he could yet just dimly hear, as in a dream, the sound of Latin prayers, and feel the application of the oils upon all the issues and approaches of his wearied sense; then utter unconsciousness, while pulse and heart gradually grew fainter until both ceased. And that was all.

TO NANCY[1]

By Sir Frederick Wedmore

Weymouth, *29th September.*

IT happens that I have seen much of you, Nancy, at an eventful moment—eventful for yourself I mean, in your life and your career—and here, because I like you, and like to think of and reflect on you, there is written down, straight and full, the record of my impression: concealing nothing, though written to yourself: a letter absolutely frank, looking all facts in the face; for, young though you are, you are intelligent enough to bear them. My letter you may find tedious, perhaps, but at all events unusual; for letters, even when detailed, generally omit much, hide some part of a thought—put the thing in a way that pleases the writer, or is intended to please the receiver. Here am I at the end of my first page, Nancy, and all preface! Well, I shall recall, to begin with, how it was that I met you.

Acquit me, please, of any general love of your over-praised Music Hall. Neither it nor the Theatre counts for much in my life. I like you personally: I imagine a Future for you; but I am not anxious for "the status of the Profession." Life, it is just possible, has other goals than that of being received in smart drawing-rooms—whatever Art you practise, its practice is your reward. Society, my dear, has bestowed of late upon the stage "lover" an attention that is misplaced. We are getting near the end of it: and, at afternoon teas, the *cabotin*, in a frock coat, no longer dominates the situation. Youths from the play-house have in the Past, over the luncheon-table, imparted to me, with

[1] A letter from Mr. Clement Ashton, the distinguished Painter, to Miss Nancy Nanson, of the Variety Theatres.

patronage, their views about Painting: to me, Nancy, to your old friend, who has painted for thirty years—a full Academician one year since, with but few honours (as men call them) left to gain: few years, alas! in which to live to gain them. Child as you are, your common sense—that neatly-balanced little mind of yours so unusually clear—that neatly-balanced mind assures you that it is not the profession you follow, but what you have been able to do in it, and what you really are, that give you—I mean of course, gives any one—legitimate claim to be in privileged places, to be motioned to the velvet of the social sward. "Artist," indeed! As well expect to be received with welcome for having had sufficient capital to buy a camp stool and a few feet of German moulding with which to frame a canvas sent to the Dudley Gallery, as to be suffered to dictate and to dogmatise in virtue of a well-worn coat and an appearance at a London theatre!

You have read so far, and yet I have not reminded you how it was that you and I came to know each other. It was just two years ago, in this Weymouth from which I write to you. I saw a photograph that struck me, at the door of your place of entertainment—at the door of the "People's Delight." The face was young—but I have known youth. Pretty, it was—but a fashionable portrait-painter lives with prettiness. It was so monstrously refined.

At three o'clock, they said, there would be an entertainment—Miss Nancy Nanson would certainly be seen. And in I went, with a companion—old Sir James Purchas, of Came Manor—my host more than once in these parts. Sir James, you know, is not a prey to the exactions of conventionality, and there was no reason why the humble entertainment your lounge and shelter offered to the tripper should not afford us half an hour's amusement.

The blazing September afternoon you recollect—September with the glare of the dog days. The "people," it seemed, were not profiting that day by the "People's Delight," for the place was all but empty—everyone out of doors—and we wandered, not aimlessly indeed, but not suc-

cessfully, among those cavernous, half-darkened regions, among the stalls for fruits and sweets and cheap jewelry, in search of a Show. A turn, and we came suddenly on rows of empty chairs placed in front of a small stage, with drawn curtains; and, at a money-taker's box (for reserved seats, as I supposed)—leaning over the money-taker's counter, in talk with someone who came, it may be, from a selling-stall—there was a child, a little girl. Sir James touched my arm, directing my attention to her, and I took the initiative—said to the little girl: "We came to see Miss Nancy Nanson. You can tell us, perhaps, when is the Show going to begin?" "There won't be any entertainment this afternoon," the girl answered; "because, you see, there isn't any audience. I am Miss Nancy Nanson." The dignity of the child!

The fact was, you remember, that photograph at the entrance gave the impression of a girl of seventeen; and I did not at all connect it with the figure of the silver-voiced, well-spoken, elegant child, who proved to be yourself—since then my model and my youthful friend. But the moment you spoke, and when my eyes, still not quite used to the obscurity, took in your real face and those refined expressions, the identity was established, though the photograph, with its dexterous concealment, showed more the Nancy Nanson you were going to be, than the Nancy Nanson that you were. I was pleased, nevertheless; and we talked about yourself for a few minutes; and when you said (because I asked you) that there would be an entertainment next day, I told you we would come to see it, certainly. And Sir James was indulgent. And I am a man of my word.

And now there is a bit we can afford to hurry over; for the next stage of our acquaintance does not advance, appreciably, the action of your story. We came; we saw your entertainment: your three "turns"; singing, dancing: and pretty enough it was—but yet, so-so. You were such a pleasant child, of course we applauded you—so refined, yet singing, tolerably, such nonsense. Even then, it was your charming little personality, you know—it was not your

performance that had in it attractiveness. Next day, I left the neighbourhood.

For two years after that, I never saw Miss Nancy Nanson, "vocalist and dancer;" only once heard of and read of you—only once, perhaps, thought of you. The once was last Christmas—your name, I saw, was advertised in a pantomime in London—played by "juveniles." I might, it is just possible, have gone to see it. But the average "juvenile!"—think!—and then, the influenza and the weather!

Well! this present glowing September, Nancy—glowing and golden as it was two years ago—brought me again, and very differently into touch with you. The Past is over. Now I fix your attention—for you are still patient with me—I fix your attention on the Present, and I point out to you, in detail—I realise to myself—how the time is critical, eventful; how you stand, Nancy, upon a certain brink. I am not going to prophesy what you may be; but I tell you what you are. The real You, you know: something better and deeper than that which those seven Pastels, any or all of them together, show you—my delighted notes of your external beauty; touched, I think, with some charm of grace that answers well to your own; and mimicking, not badly, the colours and contours of your stage presence. Nothing more. Chance gleams—an artist's "snapshots" at Miss Nancy Nanson, vocalist and dancer, at sixteen. (Sixteen yesterday). But *you*—No!

This present September—a fortnight since—I came again to Weymouth; this time alone; putting up at the old "Gloucester" (it was George the Third's house) from which I write to you; and not at Came Manor, in the neighbourhood. In the Weymouth of to-day one is obliged, in nearly every walk, to pass the "People's Delight"—your cheap vulgarity, my dear, that the great Georgian time would have resented. I passed it soon, and the two names biggest upon the bills were, "Achilles, the Strong Man"—there are things in which even a decayed watering place cannot afford to be behind the fashion, and the "strong man" is in fashion to-day—"Achilles, the Strong Man," then, and "Miss Nancy Nanson." Again did I go in; took

the seat, exactly, that I had taken two years since, in the third row of chairs; and while a band of three made casual, lifeless, introductory music, I waited for the Show.

The curtain rose presently on a great, living, breathing, over-energetic statue—a late Renaissance bronze, by John of Bologna, he seemed—that muscular piece of colour and firm form, that nigger, posed effectively, and of prodigious force. "John of Bologna"—but you never heard of him! Then he began his operations—Achilles, the Strong Man—holding, and only by his teeth, enormous weights; and rushing round with one, two, hundredweight, as if it were a feather; lifting, with that jaw of his, masses of iron; crashing them on the stage again, and standing afterwards with quivering muscles, heaving chest. Applause—I joined in it myself, in common courtesy—and then the curtain fell.

A wait. The band struck up again—it was your first "turn." A slim and dainty figure, so very slight, so very young, in a lad's evening dress, advanced with swiftness towards the footlights, and bowed in a wide sweep that embraced everyone. Then you began to sing—and not too well, you know—a song of pretty-enough sentiment; the song of a stripling whose sweetheart was his mother. His mother, she sufficed for him. It suited your young years. A tender touch or two, and with a boy's manliness. Applause! You vanished.

You vanished to return. In a girl's dress this time, with movements now more swift and now more graceful. Another song, and, this time, dancing with it. It was dancing you were born for. "She has grown another being—and yet with the old pleasantness—in these two years," I thought. "A child no longer." In colour and agility you were a brilliant show. I have told you since, in talking, what I thought of you. You were not a Sylvia Grey, my dear; still less that other Sylvia Voltaire praised contrasting her with the Camargo. The Graces danced like Sylvia, Voltaire said—like the Camargo, the wild Nymphs. No! you were not Voltaire's Sylvia, any more than you were Sylvia Grey. Sylvia Grey's dance is per-

fect, from the waist upwards—as an observant actress pointed out to me, with whom I saw it. Swan-like in the holding, and slow movement, of the head and neck; exquisite in the undulations of the torso. Where Sylvia Grey ends—I mean where her remarkableness ends (for she has legs like another, I take it)—you, my dear, begin. Your modelling wants an Ingres to do it justice. The slimness of the girl, and what a fineness, as of race; and then, the agility of infinite practice, and sixteen young years!

A third "turn"—then it was that you were agile most of all. The flying feet went skyward. Black shoes rushed, rocket-like, so far above your head, and clattered on the floor again; whilst against the sober crimson of the background curtain—a dull, thin stuff, stretched straight—gleamed the white of moving skirts, and blazed the boss of brightest scarlet that nestled somewhere in the brown gold of your head. Then, flushed and panting, it was over.

Next day, in a gaunt ante-room, or extra chamber, its wooden floor quite bare, and the place furnished only with a couple of benches and a half-voiceless semi-grand piano —the wreck of an Erard that was great once—in that big, bare room, Nancy, where my Pastels since have caught your pose, in lilac, rose and orange, but never your grave character, I came upon, and closely noted, and, for a quarter of an hour, talked to, a sedate young girl in black —a lady who, in all her bearing, ways, gesture, silver voice, was as refined as any, young or old, that I have been in contact with, in my long life—and I have lived abundantly amongst great ladies, from stately, restful Quakeress to the descendant of the "hundred Earls." No one is more refined than you. This thing may not last with you. Whether it lasts, depends, in great measure, upon the life you lead, in the strange world opening to you. Your little craft, Nancy, your slender skiff, will have some day to labour over voluminous seas.

You remember what you told me, in the great ante-room, standing by the wreck of the Erard, that your fingers touched. All your life to that time. You were frankness,

absolutely; standing there in your dull, black frock, that became you to perfection; standing with hat of broad, black straw—the clear-cut nose, the faultless mouth, the bright-brown hair curled short about your head, and the limpid look of your serene eyes, steadily grey. It was interesting, and amusing too, your story. I told you, you remember, how much you had got on, how changed you were, what progress I had noticed. And you said a pretty "Thank you." It was clear that you meant it. We were friends. I asked who taught you—so far as anything *can* be taught, in this world, where, at bottom, one's work, one's progress, is one's own. You said, your mother. And I told you I'd seen your name in some London Christmas play-bill. "I had a big success," you said. What a theatrical moment!—the one occasion, in all my little dealings with you, in which I found the traditions of "the Profession" stronger with you than your own personal character. Now, your own personal instinct is to be modest and natural; the traditions of "the Profession" are to boast. You did boast, Nancy! You had a big success, had you? Perhaps, for yourself; I do not say you failed. But the piece—my dear, you know it was a frost. Did it run three weeks? Come now! And someone, out of jealousy, paid four guineas—she or her friends did—to get you a bad notice somewhere in backstairs journalism. And they got it, and then repented of it. You were friends with them afterwards. But what a world, Nancy!—a world in which, for four guineas, a scoundrel contributes his part towards damning your career!

You remember, before I asked if I might make some sketches of you, you were turning over a song that had been sent you by a "gentleman at Birmingham." He had had it "ruled" for you, and wanted you to buy it for three pounds. It was "rather a silly song," you thought, I settled myself quietly to master the sense, or, as was more probable, the nonsense, of it. My dear, it was blank rubbish! But you were not going to have it, you said. "Mamma would never buy a song I didn't like and take to." That was well, I thought. And then you slowly

closed the ruined Erard, and were going away. But on the road down-stairs, remember, I persuaded you to ask your mother that you might give me sittings. I told you who I was. And in the gaunt ante-room, lit well from above, I had a sitting next day. It was the first of several. And your mother trusted me, and trusted you, as you deserve to be trusted. And we worked hard together, didn't we?—you posing, and I drawing. And there are seven Pastels which record—*tant bien que mal*, my dear—the delightful outside of you, the side the public might itself see, if it had eyes to really see—the flash of you in the dance, snow-white or carmine; and I got all that with alacrity—"swift means" I took, to "radiant ends"—the poise of the slim figure, the white frock slashed with gold, the lifted foot, and that gleam of vivid scarlet in your hair, against the background of most sober crimson.

This tranquil Sunday I devote to writing to you, is the day after your last appearance at the "People's Delight." You and your mother, very soon, you tell me, leave Weymouth and your old associations—it is your home, you know—and you leave it for ever. The country, you admit, is beautiful, but you are tired of the place. I don't much wonder. And you leave it—the great Bay, the noble chalk Downs, the peace of Dorset and its gleaming quiet—you leave it for lodgings in the Waterloo Road. For you must be amongst the agents for the Halls. Though you have been upon the Stage since you were very little, you have but lately, so you say, "put your heart into it." Well! it is not unnatural. But no more Sunday drives into the lovely country, recollect, with your brother, who is twenty-one and has his trade; and your uncle, who is in a good way of business here, you said—your uncle, the plumber.

And so, last night being your last night, Nancy, it was almost like a Benefit. As for your dancing, you meant, I knew, to give us the cup filled—yes, filled and running over. I had noticed that, on some earlier evening, when Little Lily Somebody—a dumpling child, light of foot, but with not one delightful "line" in all her meaningless, fat

form—when Lily Somebody had capered her infantile foolishness, to the satisfaction of those who rejoice in mere babyhood, someone presented her with a bouquet. And you danced excellently, just after her—you, height and grace, slimness and soul—and someone, with much effusion, handed you up a box of chocolates. And you smiled pleasantly. I saw there was a little conflict in your mind, however, between the gracious recognition of what was well-enough meant, and the resentment—well, the resentment we can hardly call it: the regret, at all events—at being treated so very visibly as a child—and yesterday you were to be sixteen! So I myself—who, if this small indignity had not been offered you, might conceivably have given you, in private, at all events, a basket of fine fruit—I meant to offer you flowers. It might have been fruit, I say, if smuggled into the ante-room where I had done my Pastels; for I had seen you once there, crunching, quite happily, imperfect apples between perfect teeth—your perfect teeth, almost the only perfect things, Nancy, in an imperfect world.

But it had to be flowers. So I sent round to the dressing-room, just as you were getting ready, two "button-holes" merely—wired "button-holes"—of striped carnations, red or wine-coloured. They were not worn in your first turn. They were not worn in your second. In your third turn, I espied them at your neck's side, in the fury of your dance. Already there are people, I suppose, who would have thought those striped carnations happy—tossed, tossed to pieces, in the warmth of your throat.

Your second turn, last night, you know, was in flowing white, slashed with gold—old-gold velvet—with pale stockings. The third—when the flowers died happy in your riot—in pure white alone, with stockings black. You remember the foot held in your hand, as you swing round upon the other toe—and one uplifted leg seen horizontal, in its straight and modelled slimness.

My dear—what were my little flowers? Who could have known—when you had finished—the great things still to come? When the applause seemed over, and the en-

thusiasm of some subaltern from Dorchester was, as I take it, abated or suppressed—when the applause was over, a certain elocutionist (Mr. Paris Brown, wasn't it?) brought you again upon the stage, and saying it was your last appearance, made you some presentation: a brooch from himself, "of no intrinsic value" he informed us—I willingly believed him—a bracelet from I don't know who—that *had* an "intrinsic value," I surmise—and a bouquet—exquisite! It was "From an admirer," Mr. Paris Brown, the elocutionist, read out, from an accompanying card. Then he congratulated you upon your Past; prophesied as to your Future; and, in regard to the presents to you, he said, in words that were quite happily chosen—because, Nancy, they were reticent while they were expressive—"She is but a—*girl;* and she has done her duty by the Management. Long may she be a credit to her father and mother!" Your mother I was well aware of—your mother I respect; and you, you love her. But your father—he was invented, I think, for the occasion, as an additional protection, should the designs upon you of the admirer from Dorchester prove to be not altogether such as they ought to be. The precaution was unnecessary; it was taking Time by the forelock. Our young friend looked ingenuous, and smitten grievously—you seem so big upon the stage, Nancy—so grown up, I mean. I could, I think, have toned down his emotions, had I told him you were a bare sixteen.

Nancy, there is—for me—a certain pathos in this passage of yours from childhood into ripening girlhood; a book closed, as it were; a phase completed; and ending of the way. "What chapter is to open? Nancy Nanson—what phase or facet of her life," I ask myself, "is now so soon to be presented? What other way, what unfamiliar one is to follow her blameless and dutiful childhood?" I had a restless night, Nancy. Thinking of this, one saw—ridiculously perhaps—a presage in the first bouquet, a threat in the first bracelet—in the admirer's card. Would she be like the rest?—at least, so many of them. Besmirched, too?

Remember, Nancy, I am no Puritan at all. I recognise Humanity's instincts. There is little I do not tolerate. I recognise the gulf that separates the accidentally impolitic from the essentially wrong. But we owe things to other people—to the World's laws. We have responsibilities. *Noblesse oblige;* and all superiority is *Noblesse.* "She must *not* be like the rest," I said, last night, in broken dreams; "dining, winking, leering even, since sold at last and made common." In broken dreams, last night—or in wakeful hours—your feet tossed higher: your gay blood passed into the place—electrical, overpowering. You can be so grave and sweet, you know; and you can be so mad.

Have you ever lain awake, in the great, long darkness, and watched in the darkness a procession—the people of your Past and all your Future? But you have no Past. For myself, I have watched them. My mother, who is long gone; those who were good to me, and whom I slighted; the relations who failed me; the friend I lost. And the uncertain figures of the Future! But the line of the Future is short enough for me—for you, it is all yours. Last night, it seemed to me, the dark was peopled with your enemies; with your false friends, who were coming—always coming—the unavoidable crowd of the egotistic destroyers of youth. Their dark hearts, I thought, look upon her as a prey: some of them cruel, some of them cynical, yet some of them only careless. And I wished that last night had not come—your sixteenth birthday—with the applause, and gifts, and menacing triumph.

There are women, perhaps, men cannot wrong—since they have wronged themselves too much. "This is a good girl," I said; and my over-anxious mind—in real affection for her—cries out to all the horrid forces of the world: "Leave Nancy!"

Nancy, when you read this, you smile—and naturally—at your most sombre friend. You think, of course, with all the reckless trust, courageous confidence, of girlhood, "So unnecessary!"

Go the straight way! . . . Whatever way you go, I shall always be your friend. CLEMENT ASHTON.

Post-script. But I can't end like this. For when you want to be reproached the least, some of my sentences sound hard. Be hopeful! For, as it seems to me—the more I think of you—whatever happened, the quite irreparable has *not* happened. And,—if it had! Surely, surely, you can forget, for ever, one mad hour! And, from whatever point, you can begin "the journey homeward"—to yourself. You can be the real You again; the real Nancy—your very characteristic, the perfection of the contrast between the wildness of the theatre and your happy quietude.

You were a little fool the other day, were you not? And you were on deep waters. But I believe that you did *not* go under.

And so, dear Nancy—and in any case—it's at home I must think of you. With that golden wig, that adds—piquantly perhaps, and yet abominably—to your years, the maddening dancer is put off. The brown-haired child, in the plain dress, is in her place—the short brown hair, the quiet eyes, the tender, sensitive mouth. Your lodging-house parlour is ornamented with a play-bill, and photographs are stuck about the mantelpiece—Miss Marie Dainton, is it? and your uncle, the plumber; and, again, a celebrity of the Halls; and somebody else, who was nice to you, a year ago, at Weymouth; some comrade you were fond of: "She's a dear girl," you said. In the lodging-house parlour, your mother sits beside the fireplace, combing out the golden wig, after its last night's service. The kettle, in preparation for tea-time, not far off, is at the side of the fire. It begins to sing. You, Nancy, sit beyond the table, on a cane-bottomed chair; with your knees crossed—as I saw you, that first time I called on you in London. Your hands, so young, so nervous, and so highly bred, smooth out upon your lap a bit of wool-work, that you—whose instinct is to please and to be pleasant—are doing for your landlady. And, in the glow of the fender, lies curled up, warm and sleeping, that grey kitten rescued from misery, four days before, by you: won to you by your magnetism, or your

kindness—they are both the same. In the morning, when your mother leaves your bed—leaves the tired child, worn out by the theatre, to an hour's extra resting—the soft grey thing, that you bewitched and cared for, creeps to your side—is happy.

Did they ever teach you, at your school, I wonder, verses of Wordsworth on the stock-dove? What did the stock-dove sing?

> He sang of love with quiet blending,
> Slow to begin, and never ending;
> Of serious faith, and inward glee.
> That was the song—the song for me!

Nancy!—the spirit of the stock-dove's song lies in the deepest heart of Nancy Nanson.

C. A.

AN EMPTY FRAME[1]

By George Egerton

IT was a simple, pretty little frame, such as you may buy at any sale cheaply; its ribbed wood, aspinalled white, with an inner frame of pale-blue plush; its one noticeable feature that it was empty. And yet it stood on the middle of the bedroom mantelboard.

It was not a luxurious room; none of the furniture matched. It was a typical boarding-house bedroom.

Any one preserving the child habit of endowing inanimate objects with human attributes might fancy that the flickering flames of the fire took a pleasure in bringing into relief the bright bits in its dinginess; for they played over the silver-backed brushes and the cut-glass perfume bottles on the dressing-table, flicked the bright beads on the toes of coquettish small shoes and the steel clasps of a travelling bag in the corner, imparting a casual air of comfort such as the touch of certain dainty women lends to a common room.

A woman enters,—a woman wondrously soft and swift in all her movements. She seems to reach a place without your seeing how; no motion of elbow or knee betrays her. Her fingers glide swiftly down the buttons of her gown; in a second she has freed herself from its ensheathing; garment after garment falls from her, until she stands almost free. She gets into nightdress and loose woolen dressing-gown, and slips her naked feet into fur-lined slippers, with a movement that is somehow the expression of an intense nervous relief from a thrall. Everything she does

[1] From "Keynotes." Copyright, 1893, by Roberts Brothers. By permission of Little, Brown & Co.

is done so swiftly that you see the result rather than the working out of each action.

She sinks into a chair before the fire, and clasping her hands behind her head, peers into the glowing embers. The firelight, lower than her face, touches it cruelly; picks out and accentuates as remorselessly as a rival woman the autographs past emotions have traced on its surface; deepens the hollows of her delicate thoughtful temples and the double furrow between her clever irregular eyebrows. Her face is more characteristic than beautiful. Nine men would pass it, the tenth sell his immortal soul for it. The chin is strong, the curve of jaw determined; there is a little full place under the chin's sharp point. The eyes tell you little; they are keen and inquiring, and probe others' thoughts rather than reveal their own. The whole face is one of peculiar strength and self-reliance. The mouth is its contradiction; the passionate curve of the upper lip with its mobile corners, and the tender little under lip that shelters timidly under it, are encouraging promises against its strength.

The paleness of some strong feeling tinges her face; a slight trembling runs through her frame. Her inner soul-struggle is acting as a strong developing fluid upon a highly sensitized plate; anger, scorn, pity, contempt chase one another like shadows across her face. Her eyes rest upon the empty frame, and the plain white space becomes alive to her. Her mind's eye fills it with a picture it once held in its dainty embrace,—a rare head among the rarest heads of men, with its crest of hair tossed back from the great brow, its proud poise and the impress of grand, confident, compelling genius that reveals itself, one scarce knows how; with the brute possibility of an untamed, natural man lurking about the mouth and powerful throat. She feels the subduing smile of eyes that never failed to make her weak as a child under their gaze, and tame as a hungry bird. She stretches out her hands with a pitiful little movement, and then, remembering, lets them drop, and locks them until the knuckles stand out whitely. She shuts her eyes, and one tear after the other starts from beneath her

lids, trickles down her cheeks, and drops with a splash into her lap. She does not sob, only cries quietly; and she sees, as if she held the letter in her hand, the words that decided her fate:—

"You love me; I know it, you other half of me. You want me to complete your life, as I you, you good, sweet woman; you slight, weak thing, with your strong will and your grand, great heart; you witch, with a soul of clean white fire. I kiss your hands,—such little hands! I never saw the like; slim child-hands, with a touch as cool and as soft as a snow-flake! You dear one, come to me; I want you, now, always. Be with me, work with me, share with me, live with me, my equal as a creature; above me, as my queen of women! I love you, I worship you; but you know my views. I cannot, I will not bind myself to you by any legal or religious tie. I must be free and unfettered to follow that which I believe right for me. If you come to me in all trust, I can and will give myself to you in all good faith,—yours as much as you will, forever! I will kneel to you; why should I always desire to kneel to you? Is it not that I stand in awe of you, or that I ever feel a need to kneel at all; but always to you, and to you alone. Come! I will crouch at your feet and swear myself to you!"

And she had replied "No!" and in her loneliness of spirit married him who seemed to need her most out of those who admired her.

The door opens, and he comes in. He looks inquiringly at her, touches her hair half hesitatingly, and then stands with his hands thrust in his pockets and gnaws his mustache.

"Are you angry, little woman?"

"No," very quietly; "why should I be?"

She closes her eyes again, and after five minutes' silence he begins to undress. He does it very slowly, looking perplexedly at her. When he has finished, he stands with his back to the fire, an unlovely object in sleeping suit.

"Would you like to read her letter?"

She shakes her head.

"I suppose I ought to have sent her back her letters before, you know. She hadn't heard I was married."

"Yes," she interjects, "it would have been better to start with a clean bill; but why talk about it?"

He looks at her awhile, then gets into bed and watches her from behind the pages of the "Field." It seems unusually quiet. His watch that he has left in his waistcoat pocket, thrown across the back of a chair, seems to fill the whole room with a nervous tick.

He tosses the paper on to the floor. She looks up as it falls, rises, turns off the gas-jet, sinks back into her old position, and stares into the fire. He gets up, goes over, and kneels down next her.

"I am awfully sorry you are put out, old girl. I saw you were when I answered you like that; but I couldn't help feeling a bit cut up, you know. She wrote such an awfully nice letter, you know, wished——"

"You all sorts of happiness," with a snap, "and hopes you'll meet in a better world?"

He rises to his feet and stares at her in dumb amazement. How could she know? She smiles with a touch of malicious satisfaction, as she sees the effect of her chance shot.

"It's a pity, isn't it, that you both have to wait so long?"

He imagines he sees light, and blunders ahead like an honest man.

"I wouldn't have sent those things back now if I had thought you cared. By Jove, it never entered my head that you'd be jealous!"

"Jealous?" She is on her feet like a red white flash. "I, jealous of her?" Each word is emphasized. "I couldn't be jealous of her, *Nur die Dummen sind bescheiden!* Why, the girl isn't fit to tie my shoe-strings!"

This is too much; he feels he must protest.

"You don't know her," feebly. "She is an awfully nice girl!"

"'Nice girl!' I don't doubt it; and she will be an awfully nice woman, and under each and every circumstance of life she will behave like an awfully nice person. Jealous! Do you think I cried because I was jealous? Good God, no! I cried because I was sorry, fearfully sorry, for myself. She"—with a fine thin contempt—"would have suited you better than I. Jealous! no, only sorry. Sorry because any nice average girl of her type, who would model

her frocks out of the 'Lady's Pictorial,' gush over that dear Mr. Irving, paint milking-stools, try poker-work, or any other fashionable fad, would have done you just as well. And I"—with a catch of voice—"with a great man might have made a great woman; and now those who know and understand me [bitterly] think of me as a great failure."

She finishes wearily; the fire dies out of eyes and voice. She adds half aloud, as if to herself,——

"I don't think I quite realised this until I saw how you took that letter. I was watching your face as you read it; and the fact that you could put her on the same level, that if it had not been for a mistake she would have suited you as well, made me realise, don't you see? that I would have done someone else better!"

He is looking at her in utter bewilderment, and she smiles as she notes his expression; she touches his cheek gently, and leans her head against his arm.

"There, it's all right, boy! Don't mind me. I have a bit of a complex nature; you couldn't understand me if you tried to, and better not try!"

She has slipped, while speaking, her warm bare foot out of her slipper, and is rubbing it gently over his chilled ones.

"You are cold, better go back to bed; I shall go too!"

She stands a moment quietly as he turns to obey, and then takes the frame, and kneeling down puts it gently into the hollowed red heart of the fire. It crackles crisply, and little tongues of flame shoot up; and she gets into bed by their light.

. . . . . .

When the fire has burnt out, and he is sleeping like a child with his curly head on her breast, she falls asleep too, and dreams that she is sitting on a fiery globe rolling away into space; that her head is wedged in a huge frame, the top of her head touches its top, the sides its sides, and it keeps growing larger and larger, and her head with it, until she seems to be sitting inside her own head, and the inside is one vast hollow.

THE THREE MUSKETEERS

By Rudyard Kipling

An' when the war began, we chased the bold Afghan,
An' we made the bloomin' Ghazi for to flee, boys O!
An' we marched into Ka*bul*, an' we tuk the Balar 'Issar
An' we taught 'em to respec' the British Soldier.
Barrack Room Ballad.

MULVANEY, Ortheris and Learoyd are Privates in B Company of a Line Regiment, and personal friends of mine. Collectively I think, but am not certain, they are the worst men in the regiment so far as genial blackguardism goes.

They told me this tory in the Umballa Refreshment Room while we were waiting for an up-train. I supplied the beer. The tale was cheap at a gallon and a half.

All men know Lord Benira Trig. He is a Duke, or an Earl, or something unofficial; also a Peer; also a Globe-trotter. On all three counts, as Ortheris says, "'e didn't deserve consideration." He was out in India for three months collecting materials for a book on "Our Eastern Impedimenta," and quartering himself upon everybody, like a Cossack in evening-dress.

His particular vice—because he was a Radical, men said—was having garrisons turned out for his inspection. He would then dine with the Officer Commanding, and insult him, across the Mess table, about the appearance of the troops. That was Benira's way.

He turned out troops once too often. He came to Helanthami Cantonment on a Tuesday. He wished to go shopping in the bazars on Wednesday, and he "desired" the troops to be turned out on a Thursday. *On—a—Thursday.* The Officer Commanding could not well

refuse; for Benira was a Lord. There was an indignation meeting of subalterns in the Mess Room, to call the Colonel pet names.

"But the rale dimonstrashin," said Mulvaney, "was in B comp'ny barrick; we three headin' it."

Mulvaney climbed on to the refreshment-bar, settled himself comfortably by the beer, and went on, "Whin the row was at ut's foinest an' B Comp'ny was fur goin' out to murther this man Thrigg on the p'rade-groun', Learoyd here takes up his helmet an' sez—fwhat was ut ye said?"

"Ah said," said Learoyd, "gie us t' brass. Tak oop a subscripshun, lads, for to put off t' p'rade, an' if t' p'rade's not put off, ah'll gie t' brass back again. Thot's wot ah said. All B Comp'ny knawed me. Ah took oop a big subscripshun—fower rupees eight annas 'twas—an' ah went oot to turn t' job over. Mulvaney an' Orth'ris coom with me."

"We three raises the Divil in couples gin'rally," explained Mulvaney.

Here Ortheris interrupted. "'Ave you read the papers?" said he.

"Sometimes," I said.

"We 'ad read the papers, an' we put hup a faked decoity, a—a sedukshun."

"*Ab*dukshin, ye cockney," said Mulvaney.

"*Ab*dukshun or *se*dukshun—no great odds. Any'ow, we arranged to taik an' put Mister Benhira out o' the way till Thursday was hover, or 'e too busy to rux 'isself about p'raids. *Hi* was the man wot said, 'We'll make a few rupees off o' the business.'"

"We hild a Council av War," continued Mulvaney, "walkin' roun' by the Artill'ry Lines. I was Prisidint, Learoyd was Minister av France, an' little Orth'ris here was"——

"A bloomin' Bismarck! *Hi* made the 'ole show pay."

"This interferin' bit av a Benira man," said Mulvaney, "did the thrick for us himself; for, on me sowl, we hadn't a notion av what was to come afther the next minut. He

was shoppin' in the bazar on fut. 'Twas dhrawin' dusk thin, an' we stud watchin' the little man hoppin' in an' out av the shops, thryin' to injuce the naygurs to *mallum* his *bat*. Prisintly, he sthrols up, his arrums full av thruck, an' he sez in a consiquinshal way, shticking out his little belly, 'Me good men,' sez he, 'have ye seen the Kernel's b'roosh?'—'B'roosh?' says Learoyd. 'There's no b'roosh here—nobbut a *hekka*.'—'Fwhat's that?' sez Thrigg. Learoyd shows him wan down the sthreet, an' he sez, 'How thruly Orientil! I will ride on a *hekka*.' I saw thin that our Rigimintal Saint was for givin' Thrigg over to us neck an' brisket. I purshued a *hekka*, an' I sez to the dhriver-divil, I sez, 'Ye black limb, there's a *Sahib* comin' for this *hekka*. He wants to go *jildi* to the Padsahi Jhil'—'twas about tu moiles away—'to shoot snipe—*chirria*. You dhrive *Jehannum ke marfik, mallum*—like Hell? 'Tis no manner av use *bukkin'* to the *Sahib*, bekaze he doesn't *samjao* your talk. Av he *bolos* anything, just you *choop* and *chel*. *Dekker?* Go *arsty* for the first *arder*-mile from cantonmints. Thin, *chel, Shaitan ke marfik*, an' the *chooper* you *choops*, an' the *jildier* you *chels* the better *kooshy* will that *Sahib* be; an' here's a rupee for ye.'

"The *hekka*-man knew there was somethin' out av the common in the air. He grinned an' sez, '*Bote achee!* I goin' damn fast.' I prayed that the Kernel's b'roosh wudn't arrive till me darlin' Benira by the grace av God was undher weigh. The little man puts his thruck into the *hekka* an' scuttles in like a fat guinea-pig; niver offerin' us the price av a dhrink for our services in helpin' him home. 'He's off to the Padsahi *jhil*,' sez I to the others."

Ortheris took up the tale——

"Jist then, little Buldoo kim up, 'oo was the son of one of the Artillery grooms—'e would 'av made a 'evinly newspaper-boy in London, bein' sharp an' fly to all manner o' games. 'E 'ad bin watchin' us puttin' Mister Benhira into 'is temporary baroush, an' 'e sez, 'What *'ave* you been been a doin' of, *Sahibs?*' sez 'e. Learoyd 'e caught 'im by the ear an 'e sez"——

"Ah says," went on Learoyd, "'Young mon, that mon's

gooin' to have t' goons out o' Thursday—to-morrow—an' thot's more work for you, young mon. Now, sitha, tak' a *tat* an' a *lookri*, an' ride the domdest to t' Padsahi Jhil. Cotch thot there *hekka*, and tell t' driver iv your lingo thot you've coom to tak' his place. T' *Sahib* doesn't speak t' *bat*, an' he's a little mon. Drive t' *hekka* into t' Padsahi Jhil into t' watter. Leave t' *Sahib* theer an' roon hoam; an' here's a rupee for tha'.' "

Then Mulvaney and Ortheris spoke together in alternate fragments: Mulvaney leading (You must pick out the two speakers as best you can):—"He was a knowin' little divil was Bhuldoo,—'e sez *bote achee* an' cuts—wid a wink in his oi—but *Hi* sez there's money to be made—an' I wanted to see the ind ave the campaign—so *Hi* says we'll double hout to the Padsahi Jhil—an' save the little man from bein' dacoited by the murtherin' Bhuldoo—an' turn hup like reskooers in a Vic'oria Melodrama—so we doubled for the *jhil*, an' prisintly there was the divil av a hurroosh behind us an' three bhoys on grass-cuts' ponies come by, poundin' along for the dear life—s'elp me Bob, hif Bhuldoo 'adn't raised a rig'lar *harmy* of decoits—to do the job in shtile. An' we ran, an' they ran, shplittin' with laughin', till we gets near the *jhil*—and 'ears sounds of distress floatin' molloncolly on the hevenin' hair. (Ortheris was growing poetical under the influence of the beer. The duet recommenced: Mulvaney leading again.)

"Thin we heard Bhuldoo, the dacoit, shoutin' to the *hekka* man, an' wan of the young divils brought his stick down on the top av the *hekka*-cover, an' Benira Thrigg inside howled 'Murther an' Death.' Bhuldoo takes the reins and dhrives like mad for the *jhil*, havin' dispersed the *hekka*-dhriver—'oo cum up to us an' e' sez, sez 'e, 'That *Sahib's* nigh mad with funk! Wot devil's work 'ave you led me into?'—'Hall right,' sez we, 'you catch that there pony an' come along. This *Sahib's* been decoited, an' we're going to resky 'im!' Says the driver, 'Decoits! Wot decoits? That's Bhuldoo the *budmask*'—'Bhuldoo be shot,' sez we. ' 'Tis a woild dissolute Pathan frum the hills. There's about eight av thim coercin' the *Sahib*. You remimber that an'

you'll get another rupee!' Thin we heard the *whop-whop-whop* av the *hekka* turnin' over, an' a splash av water an' the voice av Benira Thrigg callin' upon God to forgive his sins—an' Bhuldoo an' 'is friends squotterin' in the water like boys in the Serpentine."

Here the three musketeers retired simultaneously into the beer.

"Well? What came next?" said I.

"Fwhat nex'?" answered Mulvaney, wiping his mouth. "Wud ye let three bould sodgerbhoys lave the ornamint av the House av Lords to be dhrowned an' dacoited in a *jhil?* We formed line av quarther-column an' we discinded upon the inimy. For the better part av tin minutes you could not hear yerself spake. The *tattoo* was screamin' in chune wid Benira Thrigg an' Bhuldoo's army, an' the shticks was whistlin' roun' the *hekka,* an' Orth'ris was beatin' the *hekka*-cover wid his fists, an' Learoyd yellin' 'Look out for their knives!' an' me cuttin' into the dark, right an' lef', disphersin' arrmy corps av Pathans. Holy Mother av Moses! 'Twas more disp'rit than Ahmid Kheyl wid Maiwund thrown in. Afther a while Bhuldoo an' his bhoys flees. Have ye iver seen a rale live Lord thryin' to hide his nobility undher a fut an' a half av brown swamp-wather? 'Tis the livin' image av a water-carrier's goat-skin wid the shivers. It tuk toime to pershuade me frind Benira he was not disimbowilled: an' more toime to get out the *hekka.* The dhriver come up afther the battle, swearin' he tuk a hand in repulsin' the inimy. Benira was sick wid the fear. We escorted him back, very slow, to cantonmints, for that an' the chill to soak into him. It suk? Glory be to the Rigimintil Saint, but it suk to the marrow av Lord Benira Thrigg!"

Here Ortheris, slowly, with immense pride—"'E sez, 'You har my noble preservers,' sez 'e. 'You har a *h*onour to the British Harmy,' sez 'e. With that 'e describes the hawful band of dacoits wot set on 'im. Ther was about forty of 'em an' 'e was hoverpowered by numbers, so 'e was; but 'e never lorst 'is presence of mind, so 'e didn't. 'E guv the *hekka*-driver five rupees for 'is noble assistance, an' 'e said

'e would see to us after 'e 'ad spoken to the Kernul. For we was a *h*onour to the Regiment, we was."

"An' we three," said Mulvaney, with a seraphic smile, "have dhrawn the par-ti-cu-lar attinshin av Bobs Bahadur more than wanst. But he's a rale good little man is Bobs. Go on, Orth'ris, my son."

"Then we leaves 'im at the Kernul's 'ouse, werry sick, an' we cuts hover to B Comp'ny barrick an' we sez we 'ave saved Benira from a bloody doom, an' the chances was agin there bein' p'raid on Thursday. About ten minutes later come three envelicks, one for each of us. S'elp me Bob, if the old bloke 'adn't guv us a fiver apiece—sixty-four rupees in the bazar! On Thursday 'e was in 'orspital recoverin' from 'is sanguinary encounter with a gang of Pathans, an' B Comp'ny was drinkin' 'emselves into Clink by squads. So there never was no Thursday p'raid. But the Kernul, when 'e 'eard of our galliant conduct, 'e sez, 'Hi know there's been some devilry somewheres,' sez 'e, 'but I can't bring it 'ome to you three.'"

"An' my privit imprisshin is," said Mulvaney, getting off the bar and turning his glass upside down, "that, av they had known they wudn't have brought ut home. 'Tis flyin' in the face, firstly av Nature, secon' av the Rig'lations, an' third the will av Terence Mulvaney, to hold p'rades av Thursdays."

"Good, ma son!" said Learoyd; "but, young mon, what's t' notebook for?"

"Let be," said Mulvaney; "this time next month we're in the *Sherapis*. 'Tis immortial fame the gentleman's goin' to give us. But kape it dhark till we're out av the range av me little frind Bobs Bahadur."

And I have obeyed Mulvaney's order.

WEE WILLIE WINKIE

By Rudyard Kipling

"An officer and a gentleman."

HIS full name was Percival William Williams, but he picked up the other name in a nursery-book, and that was the end of the christened titles. His mother's *ayah* called him Willie-*Baba*, but as he never paid the faintest attention to anything that the *ayah* said, her wisdom did not help matters.

His father was the Colonel of the 195th, and as soon as Wee Willie Winkie was old enough to understand what Military Discipline meant, Colonel Williams put him under it. There was no other way of managing the child. When he was good for a week, he drew good-conduct pay; and when he was bad, he was deprived of his good-conduct stripe. Generally he was bad, for India offers many chances of going wrong to little six-year-olds.

Children resent familiarity from strangers, and Wee Willie Winkie was a very particular child. Once he accepted an acquaintance, he was graciously pleased to thaw. He accepted Brandis, a subaltern of the 195th, on sight. Brandis was having tea at the Colonel's, and Wee Willie Winkie entered strong in the possession of a good-conduct badge won for not chasing the hens round the compound. He regarded Brandis with gravity for at least ten minutes, and then delivered himself of his opinion.

"I like you," said he slowly, getting off his chair and coming over to Brandis. "I like you. I shall call you Coppy, because of your hair. Do you *mind* being called Coppy? It is because of ve hair, you know."

Here was one of the most embarrassing of Wee Willie Winkie's peculiarities. He would look at a stranger for some time, and then, without warning or explanation, would give him a name. And the name stuck. No regimental penalties could break Wee Willie Winkie of this habit. He lost his good-conduct badge for christening the Commissioner's wife "Pobs"; but nothing that the Colonel could do made the Station forego the nickname, and Mrs. Collen remained "Pobs" till the end of her stay. So Brandis was christened "Coppy," and rose, therefore, in the estimation of the regiment.

If Wee Willie Winkie took an interest in anyone, the fortunate man was envied alike by the mess and the rank and file. And in their envy lay no suspicion of self-interest. "The Colonel's son" was idolised on his own merits entirely. Yet Wee Willie Winkie was not lovely. His face was permanently freckled, as his legs were permanently scratched, and in spite of his mother's almost tearful remonstrances he had insisted upon having his long yellow locks cut short in the military fashion. "I want my hair like Sergeant Tummil's," said Wee Willie Winkie, and, his father abetting, the sacrifice was accomplished.

Three weeks after the bestowal of his youthful affections on Lieutenant Brandis—henceforward to be called "Coppy" for the sake of brevity—Wee Willie Winkie was destined to behold strange things and far beyond his comprehension.

Coppy returned his liking with interest. Coppy had let him wear for five rapturous minutes his own big sword —just as tall as Wee Willie Winkie. Coppy had promised him a terrier puppy, and Coppy had permitted him to witness the miraculous operation of shaving. Nay, more— Coppy had said that even he, Wee Willie Winkie, would rise in time to the ownership of a box of shiny knives, a silver soap-box and a silver-handled "sputter-brush," as Wee Willie Winkie called it. Decidedly, there was no one except his father, who could give or take away good-conduct badges at pleasure, half so wise, strong, and valiant as Coppy with the Afghan and Egyptian medals on his

breast. Why, then, should Coppy be guilty of the unmanly weakness of kissing—vehemently kissing— a "big girl," Miss Allardyce to wit? In the course of a morning ride, Wee Willie Winkie had seen Coppy so doing, and, like the gentleman he was, had promptly wheeled round and cantered back to his groom, lest the groom should also see.

Under ordinary circumstances he would have spoken to his father, but he felt instinctively that this was a matter on which Coppy ought first to be consulted.

"Coppy," shouted Wee Willie Winkie, reining up outside that subaltern's bungalow early one morning—"I want to see you, Coppy!"

"Come in, young 'un," returned Coppy, who was at early breakfast in the midst of his dogs. "What mischief have you been getting into now?"

Wee Willie Winkie had done nothing notoriously bad for three days, and so stood on a pinnacle of virtue.

"*I've* been doing nothing bad," said he, curling himself into a long chair with a studious affectation of the Colonel's languor after a hot parade. He buried his freckled nose in a tea-cup and, with eyes staring roundly over the rim, asked: "I say, Coppy, is it pwoper to kiss big girls?"

"By Jove! You're beginning early. Who do you want to kiss?"

"No one. My muvver's always kissing me if I don't stop her. If it isn't pwoper, how was you kissing Major Allardyce's big girl last morning, by ve canal?"

Coppy's brow wrinkled. He and Miss Alldardyce had with great craft managed to keep their engagement secret for a fortnight. There were urgent and imperative reasons why Major Allardyce should not know how matters stood for at least another month, and this small marplot had discovered a great deal too much.

"I saw you," said Wee Willie Winkie calmly. "But ve *sais* didn't see. I said, '*Hut jao!*'"

"Oh, you had that much sense, you young Rip," groaned poor Coppy, half amused and half angry. "And how many people may you have told about it?"

"Only me myself. You didn't tell when I twied to wide

ve buffalo ven my pony was lame; and I fought you wouldn't like."

"Winkie," said Coppy enthusiastically, shaking the small hand, "you're the best of good fellows. Look here, you can't understand all these things. One of these days—hang it, how can I make you see it!—I'm going to marry Miss Allardyce, and then she'll be Mrs. Coppy, as you say. If your young mind is so scandalised at the idea of kissing big girls, go and tell your father."

"What will happen?" said Wee Willie Winkie, who firmly believed that his father was omnipotent.

"I shall get into trouble," said Coppy, playing his trump card with an appealing look at the holder of the ace.

"Ven I won't," said Wee Willie Winkie briefly. "But my faver says it's un-man-ly to be always kissing, and I didn't fink *you'd* do vat, Coppy."

"I'm not always kissing, old chap. It's only now and then, and when you're bigger you'll do it too. Your father meant it's not good for little boys."

"Ah!" said Wee Willie Winkie, now fully enlightened. "It's like ve sputter-brush?"

"Exactly," said Coppy gravely.

"But I don't fink I'll ever want to kiss big girls, nor no one, 'cept my muvver. And I *must* vat, you know."

There was a long pause, broken by Wee Willie Winkie.

"Are you fond of vis big girl, Coppy?"

"Awfully!" said Coppy.

"Fonder van you are of Bell or ve Butcha—or me?"

"It's in a different way," said Coppy. "You see, one of these days Miss Allardyce will belong to me, but you'll grow up and command the Regiment and—all sorts of things. It's quite different, you see."

"Very well," said Wee Willie Winkie, rising. "If you're fond of ve big girl, I won't tell anyone. I must go now."

Coppy rose and escorted his small guest to the door, adding—"You're the best of little fellows, Winkie. I tell you what. In thirty days from now you can tell if you like—tell anyone you like."

Thus the secret of the Brandis-Allardyce engagement was dependent on a little child's word. Coppy, who knew Wee Willie Winkie's idea of truth, was at ease, for he felt that he would not break promises. Wee Willie Winkie betrayed a special and unusual interest in Miss Allardyce, and, slowly revolving round that embarrassed young lady, was used to regard her gravely with unwinking eye. He was trying to discover why Coppy should have kissed her. She was not half so nice as his own mother. On the other hand, she was Coppy's property, and would in time belong to him. Therefore it behooved him to treat her with as much respect as Coppy's big sword or shiny pistol.

The idea that he shared a great secret in common with Coppy kept Wee Willie Winkie unusually virtuous for three weeks. Then the Old Adam broke out, and he made what he called a "camp-fire" at the bottom of the garden. How could he have foreseen that the flying sparks would have lighted the Colonel's little hay-rick and consumed a week's store for the horses? Sudden and swift was the punishment—deprivation of the good-conduct badge and, most sorrowful of all, two days' confinement to barracks —the house and veranda—coupled with the withdrawal of the light of his father's countenance.

He took the sentence like the man he strove to be, drew himself up with a quivering under-lip, saluted, and, once clear of the room, ran to weep bitterly in his nursery—called by him "my quarters." Coppy came in the afternoon and attempted to console the culprit.

"I'm under awwest," said Wee Willie Winkie mournfully, "and I didn't ought to speak to you."

Very early the next morning he climbed on to the roof of the house—that was not forbidden—and beheld Miss Allardyce going for a ride.

"Where are you going?" cried Wee Willie Winkie.

"Across the river," she answered, and trotted forward.

Now the cantonment in which the 195th lay was bounded on the north by a river—dry in the winter. From his earliest years, Wee Willie Winkie had been forbidden to go across the river, and had noted that even Coppy—the almost

almighty Coppy—had never set foot beyond it. Wee Willie Winkie had once been read to, out of a big blue book, the history of the Princess and the Goblins—a most wonderful tale of a land where the Goblins were always warring with the children of men until they were defeated by one Curdie. Ever since that date it seemed to him that the bare black and purple hills across the river were inhabited by Goblins, and, in truth, everyone had said that there lived the Bad Men. Even in his own house the lower halves of the windows were covered with green paper on account of the Bad Men who might, if allowed clear view, fire into peaceful drawing-rooms and comfortable bedrooms. Certainly, beyond the river, which was the end of all the Earth, lived the Bad Men. And here was Major Allardyce's big girl, Coppy's property, preparing to venture into their borders! What would Coppy say if anything happened to her? If the Goblins ran off with her as they did with Curdie's Princess? She must at all hazards be turned back.

The house was still. Wee Willie Winkie reflected for a moment on the very terrible wrath of his father; and then —broke his arrest! It was a crime unspeakable. The low sun threw his shadow, very large and very black, on the trim garden-paths, as he went down to the stables and ordered his pony. It seemed to him in the hush of the dawn that all the big world had been bidden to stand still and look at Wee Willie Winkie guilty of mutiny. The drowsy *sais* gave him his mount, and, since the one great sin made all others insignificant, Wee Willie Winkie said that he was going to ride over to Coppy Sahib, and went out at a foot-pace, stepping on the soft mould of the flower-borders.

The devastating track of the pony's feet was the last misdeed that cut him off from all sympathy of Humanity. He turned into the road, leaned forward, and rode as fast as the pony could put foot to the ground in the direction of the river.

But the liveliest of twelve-two ponies can do little against the long canter of a Waler. Miss Allardyce was far ahead,

had passed through the crops, beyond the Police-posts, when all the guards were asleep, and her mount was scattering the pebbles of the river-bed as Wee Willie Winkie left the cantonment and British India behind him. Bowed forward and still flogging, Wee Willie Winkie shot into Afghan territory, and could just see Miss Allardyce a black speck, flickering across the stony plain. The reason of her wandering was simple enough. Coppy, in a tone of too-hastily-assumed authority, had told her over night that she must not ride out by the river. And she had gone to prove her own spirit and teach Coppy a lesson.

Almost at the foot of the inhospitable hills, Wee Willie Winkie saw the Waler blunder and come down heavily. Miss Allardyce struggled clear, but her ankle had been severely twisted, and she could not stand. Having fully shown her spirit, she wept, and was surprised by the apparition of a white, wide-eyed child in khaki, on a nearly spent pony.

"Are you badly, badly hurted?" shouted Wee Willie Winkie, as soon as he was within range. "You didn't ought to be here."

"I don't know," said Miss Allardyce ruefully, ignoring the reproof. "Good gracious, child, what are *you* doing here?"

"You said you was going acwoss ve wiver," panted Wee Willie Winkie, throwing himself off his pony. "And nobody—not even Coppy—must go acwoss ve wiver, and I came after you ever so hard, but you wouldn't stop, and now you've hurted yourself, and Coppy will be angwy wiv me, and—I've bwoken my awwest! I've bwoken my awwest!"

The future Colonel of the 195th sat down and sobbed. In spite of the pain in her ankle the girl was moved.

"Have you ridden all the way from cantonments, little man? What for?"

"You belonged to Coppy. Coppy told me so!" wailed Wee Willie Winkie disconsolately. "I saw him kissing you, and he said he was fonder of you van Bell or ve Butcha or me. And so I came. You must get up and come back.

You didn't ought to be here. Vis is a bad place, and I've bwoken my awwest."

"I can't move, Winkie," said Miss Allardyce, with a groan. "I've hurt my foot. What shall I do?"

She showed a readiness to weep anew, which steadied Wee Willie Winkie, who had been brought up to believe that tears were the depth of unmanliness. Still, when one is as great a sinner as Wee Willie Winkie, even a man may be permitted to break down.

"Winkie," said Miss Allardyce, "when you've rested a little, ride back and tell them to send out something to carry me back in. It hurts fearfully."

The child sat still for a little time and Miss Allardyce closed her eyes; the pain was nearly making her faint. She was roused by Wee Willie Winkie tying up the reins on his pony's neck and setting it free with a vicious cut of his whip that made it whicker. The little animal headed towards the cantonments.

"Oh, Winkie! What are you doing?"

"Hush!" said Wee Willie Winkie. "Vere's a man coming—one of ve Bad Men. I must stay wiv you. My faver says a man must *always* look after a girl. Jack will go home, and ven vey'll come and look for us. Vat's why I let him go."

Not one man but two or three had appeared from behind the rocks of the hills, and the heart of Wee Willie Winkie sank within him, for just in this manner were the Goblins wont to steal out and vex Curdie's soul. Thus had they played in Curdie's garden, he had seen the picture, and thus had they frightened the Princess's nurse. He heard them talking to each other, and recognised with joy the bastard Pushto that he had picked up from one of his father's grooms lately dismissed. People who spoke that tongue could not be the Bad Men. They were only natives after all.

They came up to the bowlders on which Miss Allardyce's horse had blundered.

Then rose from the rock Wee Willie Winkie, child of the Dominant Race, aged six and three-quarters, and said

briefly and emphatically *"Jao!"* The pony had crossed the river-bed.

The men laughed, and laughter from natives was the one thing Wee Willie could not tolerate. He asked them what they wanted and why they did not depart. Other men with most evil faces and crooked-stocked guns crept out of the shadows of the hills, till, soon, Wee Willie Winkie was face to face with an audience some twenty strong. Miss Allardyce screamed.

"Who are you?" said one of the men.

"I am the Colonel Sahib's son, and my order is that you go at once. You black men are frightening the Miss Sahib. One of you must run into cantonments and take the news that the Miss Sahib has hurt herself, and that the Colonel's son is here with her."

"Put our feet into the trap?" was the laughing reply. "Hear this boy's speech!"

"Say that I sent you—I, the Colonel's son. They will give you money."

"What is the use of this talk? Take up the child and the girl, and we can at least ask for the ransom. Ours are the villages on the heights," said a voice in the background.

These *were* the Bad Men—worse than Goblins—and it needed all Wee Willie Winkie's training to prevent him from bursting into tears. But he felt that to cry before a native, excepting only his mother's *ayah*, would be an infamy greater than any mutiny. Moreover, he, as future Colonel of the 195th, had that grim regiment at his back.

"Are you going to carry us away?" said Wee Willie Winkie, very blanched and uncomfortable.

"Yes, my little *Sahib Bahadur*," said the tallest of the men, "and eat you afterwards."

"That is child's talk," said Wee Willie Winkie. "Men do not eat men."

A yell of laughter interrupted him, but he went on firmly—"And if you do carry us away, I tell you that all my regiment will come up in a day and kill you all

without leaving one. Who will take my message to the Colonel Sahib?"

Speech in any vernacular—and Wee Willie Winkie had a colloquial acquaintance with three—was easy to the boy who could not yet manage his "r's" and "th's" aright.

Another man joined the conference, crying: "O foolish men! What this babe says is true. He is the heart's heart of those white troops. For the sake of peace let them go both, for if he be taken, the regiment will break loose and gut the valley. *Our* villages are in the valley, and we shall not escape. That regiment are devils. They broke Khoda Yar's breastbone with kicks when he tried to take the rifles; and if we touch this child they will fire and rape and plunder for a month, till nothing remains. Better to send a man back to take the message and get a reward. I say that this child is their God, and that they will spare none of us, nor our women, if we harm him."

It was Din Mahommed, the dismissed groom of the Colonel, who made the diversion, and an angry and heated discussion followed. Wee Willie Winkie, standing over Miss Allardyce, waited the upshot. Surely his "wegiment," his own "wegiment," would not desert him if they knew of his extremity.

* * * * * *

The riderless pony brought the news to the 195th, though there had been consternation in the Colonel's household for an hour before. The little beast came in through the parade-ground in front of the main barracks, where the men were settling down to play Spoilfive till the afternoon. Devlin, the Colour-Sergeant of E Company, glanced at the empty saddle and tumbled through the barrack-rooms, kicking up each Room Corporal as he passed. "Up, ye beggars! There's something happened to the Colonel's son," he shouted.

"He couldn't fall off! S'elp me, 'e *couldn't* fall off," blubbered a drummer-boy. "Go an' hunt acrost the river. He's over there if he's anywhere, an' maybe those Pathans have got 'im. For the love o' Gawd don't look for 'im in the nullahs! Let's go over the river."

"There's sense in Mott yet," said Devlin. "E Company, double out to the river—sharp!"

So E Company, in its shirt-sleeves mainly, doubled for the dear life, and in the rear toiled the perspiring Sergeant, adjuring it to double yet faster. The cantonment was alive with the men of the 195th hunting for Wee Willie Winkie, and the Colonel finally overtook E Company, far too exhausted to swear, struggling in the pebbles of the river-bed.

Up the hill under which Wee Willie Winkie's Bad Men were discussing the wisdom of carrying off the child and the girl, a look-out fired two shots.

"What have I said?" shouted Din Mahommed. "There is the warning! The *pulton* are out already and are coming across the plain! Get away! Let us not be seen with the boy!"

The men waited for an instant, and then, as another shot was fired, withdrew into the hills, silently as they had appeared.

"The wegiment is coming," said Wee Willie Winkie confidently to Miss Allardyce, "and it's all wight. Don't cwy!"

He needed the advice himself, for ten minutes later, when his father came up, he was weeping bitterly with his head in Miss Allardyce's lap.

And the men of the 195th carried him home with shouts and rejoicings; and Coppy, who had ridden a horse into a lather, met him, and, to his intense disgust, kissed him openly in the presence of the men.

But there was balm for his dignity. His father assured him that not only would the breaking of arrest be condoned, but that the good-conduct badge would be restored as soon as his mother could sew it on his blouse-sleeve. Miss Allardyce had told the Colonel a story that made him proud of his son.

"She belonged to you, Coppy," said Wee Willie Winkie, indicating Miss Allardyce with a grimy forefinger. "I *knew* she didn't ought to go acwoss ve wiver, and I knew ve wegiment would come to me if I sent Jack home."

"You're a hero, Winkie," said Coppy—"a *pukka* hero!"



"I don't know what vat means," said Wee Willie Winkie, "but you mustn't call me Winkie any no more. I'm Percival Will'am Will'ams."

And in this manner did Wee Willie Winkie enter into his manhood.

HOW GAVIN BIRSE PUT IT TO MAG LOWNIE

By Sir J. M. Barrie

IN a wet day the rain gathered in blobs on the road that passed our garden. Then it crawled into the cart-tracks until the road was streaked with water. Lastly, the water gathered in heavy yellow pools. If the on-ding still continued, clods of earth toppled from the garden dyke into the ditch.

On such a day, when even the dulseman had gone into shelter, and the women scudded by with their wrappers over their heads, came Gavin Birse to our door. Gavin, who was the Glen Quharity post, was still young, but had never been quite the same man since some amateurs in the glen ironed his back for rheumatism. I thought he had called to have a crack with me. He sent his compliments up to the attic, however, by Leeby, and would I come and be a witness?

Gavin came up and explained. He had taken off his scarf and thrust it into his pocket, lest the rain should take the colour out of it. His boots cheeped, and his shoulders had risen to his ears. He stood steaming before my fire.

"If it's no ower muckle to ask ye," he said, "I would like ye for a witness."

"A witness! But for what do you need a witness, Gavin?"

"I want ye," he said, "to come wi' me to Mag's, and be a witness."

Gavin and Mag Lownie had been engaged for a year or more. Mag was the daughter of Janet Ogilvy, who was best remembered as the body that took the hill (that is,

wandered about it) for twelve hours on the day Mr. Dishart, the Auld Licht minister, accepted a call to another church.

"You don't mean to tell me, Gavin," I asked, "that your marriage is to take place to-day?"

By the twist of his mouth I saw that he was only deferring a smile.

"Far frae that," he said.

"Ah, then, you have quarrelled, and I am to speak up for you?"

"Na, na," he said, "I dinna want ye to do that above all things. It would be a favour if ye could gie me a bad character."

This beat me, and, I dare say, my face showed it.

"I'm no juist what ye would call anxious to marry Mag noo," said Gavin, without a tremor.

I told him to go on.

"There's a lassie oot at Craigiebuckle," he explained, "workin' on the farm—Jeanie Luke by name. Ye may hae seen her?"

"What of her?" I asked, severely.

"Weel," said Gavin, still unabashed, "I'm thinkin' noo 'at I would rather hae her."

Then he stated his case more fully.

"Ay, I thocht I liked Mag oncommon till I saw Jeanie, an' I like her fine yet, but I prefer the other ane. That state o' matters canna gang on for ever, so I came into Thrums the day to settle 't one wy or another."

"And how," I asked, "do you propose going about it? It is a somewhat delicate business."

"Ou, I see nae great difficulty in't. I'll speir at Mag, blunt oot, if she'll let me aff. Yes, I'll put it to her plain."

"You're sure Jeanie would take you?"

"Ay; oh, there's nae fear o' that."

"But if Mag keeps you to your bargain?"

"Weel, in that case there's nae harm done."

"You are in a great hurry, Gavin?"

"Ye may say that; but I want to be married. The wifie

I lodge wi' cannot last lang, an' I would like to settle doon in some place."

"So you are on your way to Mag's now?"

"Ay, we'll get her in atween twal' and ane."

"Oh, yes; but why do you want me to go with you?"

"I want ye for a witness. If she winna let me aff, weel and guid; and if she will, it's better to hae a witness in case she should go back on her word."

Gavin made his proposal briskly, and as coolly as if he were only asking me to go fishing; but I did not accompany him to Mag's. He left the house to look for another witness, and about an hour afterwards Jess saw him pass with Tammas Haggart. Tammas cried in during the evening to tell us how the mission prospered.

"Mind ye," said Tammas, a drop of water hanging to the point of his nose, "I disclaim all responsibility in the business. I ken Mag weel for a thrifty, respectable woman, as her mither was afore her, and so I said to Gavin when he came to speir me."

"Ay, mony a pirn has 'Lisbeth filled to me," said Hendry, settling down to a reminiscence.

"No to be ower hard on Gavin," continued Tammas, forestalling Hendry, "he took what I said in guid part; but aye when I stopped speakin' to draw breath, he says, 'The question is, will ye come wi' me?' He was michty made up in's mind."

"Weel, ye went wi' him," suggested Jess, who wanted to bring Tammas to the point.

"Ay," said the stone-breaker, "but no in sic a hurry as that."

He worked his mouth round and round, to clear the course, as it were, for a sarcasm.

"Fowk often say," he continued, "'at am quick beyond the ord'nar' in seeing the humorous side o' things."

Here Tammas paused, and looked at us.

"So ye are, Tammas," said Hendry. "Losh, ye mind hoo ye saw the humorous side o' me wearin' a pair o' boots 'at wisna marrows! No, the ane had a toe-piece on, an' the other hadna."

"Ye juist wore them sometimes when ye was delvin'," broke in Jess, "ye have as guid a pair o' boots as ony in Thrums."

"Ay, but I had worn them," said Hendry, "at odd times for mair than a year, an' I had never seen the humorous side o' them. Weel, as fac as death (here he addressed me), Tammas had juist seen them twa or three times when he saw the humorous side o' them. Syne I saw their humorous side, too, but no till Tammas pointed it oot."

"That was naething," said Tammas, "naething ava to some things I've done."

"But what aboot Mag?" said Leeby.

"We wasna that length, was we?" said Tammas. "Na, we was speakin' aboot the humorous side. Ay, wait a wee, I didna mention the humorous side for naething."

He paused to reflect.

"Oh, yes," he said at last, brightening up, "I was sayin' to ye hoo quick I was to see the humorous side o' onything. Ay, then, what made me say that was 'at in a clink (flash) I saw the humorous side o' Gavin's position."

"Man, man," said Hendry, admiringly, "and what is 't?"

"Oh, it's this, there's something humorous in speirin' a woman to let ye aff so as ye can be married to another woman."

"I daursay there is," said Hendry, doubtfully.

"Did she let him aff?" asked Jess, taking the words out of Leeby's mouth.

"I'm comin' to that," said Tammas. "Gavin proposes to me after I had ha'en my laugh—"

"Yes," cried Hendry, banging the table with his fist, "it has a humorous side. Ye're richt again, Tammas."

"I wish ye wadna blatter (beat) the table," said Jess, and then Tammas proceeded.

"Gavin wanted me to tak' paper an' ink an' a pen wi' me, to write the proceedin's doon, but I said, 'Na, na, I'll tak' paper, but no nae ink nor nae pen, for there'll be ink an' a pen there.' That was what I said."

"An' did she let him aff?" asked Leeby.

"Weel," said Tammas, "aff we goes to Mag's hoose, an'

sure enough Mag was in. She was alone, too; so Gavin, no to waste time, juist sat doon for politeness' sake, an' syne rises up again; an' says he, 'Marget Lownie, I hae a solemn question to speir at ye, namely this, Will you, Marget Lownie, let me, Gavin Birse, aff?' "

"Mag would start at that?"

"Sal, she was braw an' cool. I thocht she maun hae got wind o' his intentions aforehand, for she juist replies, quiet-like, 'Hoo do ye want aff, Gavin?' "

" 'Because,' says he, like a book, 'my affections has undergone a change.'

" 'Ye mean Jean Luke,' says Mag.

" 'That is wha I mean,' says Gavin, very straitforrard."

"But she didna let him aff, did she?"

"Na, she wasna the kind. Says she, 'I wonder to hear ye, Gavin, but am no goin' to agree to naething o' that sort.'

" 'Think it ower,' says Gavin.

" 'Na, my mind's made up,' said she.

" 'Ye would sune get anither man,' he says, earnestly.

" 'Hoo do I ken that?' she speirs, rale sensibly, I thocht, for men's no sae easy to get.

" 'Am sure o't,' Gavin says, wi' michty conviction in his voice, 'for ye're bonny to look at, an' weel kent for bein' a guid body.'

" 'Ay,' says Mag, 'I'm glad ye like me, Gavin, for ye have to tak me.' "

"That put a clincher on him," interrupted Hendry.

"He was loth to gie in," replied Tammas, "so he says, 'Ye think am a fine character, Marget Lownie, but ye're very far mista'en. I wouldna wonder but what I was losin' my place some o' thae days, an' syne whaur would ye be? —Marget Lownie,' he goes on, 'am nat'rally lazy an' fond o' the drink. As sure as ye stand there, am a reg'lar deevil!' "

"That was strong language," said Hendry, "but he would be wantin' to fleg (frighten) her?"

"Juist so, but he didna manage 't, for Mag says, 'We a' hae oor faults, Gavin, an' deevil or no deevil, ye're the man for me!'

"Gavin thocht a bit," continued Tammas, "an' syne he tries her on a new tack. 'Marget Lownie,' he says, 'yer father's an auld man noo, an' he has naebody but yersel to look after him. I'm thinkin' it would be kind o' cruel o' me to tak ye awa' frae him?'"

"Mag wouldna be ta'en wi' that; she wasna born on a Sawbath," said Jess, using one of her favorite sayings.

"She wasna," answered Tammas. "Says she, 'Hae nae fear on that score, Gavin; my father's fine willin' to spare me!'"

"An' that ended it?"

"Ay, that ended it."

"Did ye tak it doun in writin'?" asked Hendry.

"There was nae need," said Tammas, handing round his snuff-mull. "No, I never touched paper. When I saw the thing was settled, I left them to their coortin'. They're to tak a look at Snecky Hobart's auld hoose the nicht. It's to let."

THE FISHER OF MEN[1]

By Fiona Macleod

"But now I have grown nothing, being all,
And the whole world weighs down upon my heart."
(Fergus and the Druid.)

WHEN old Sheen nic Lèoid came back to the croft, after she had been to the burn at the edge of the green airidh, where she had washed the *claar* that was for the potatoes at the peeling, she sat down before the peats.

She was white with years. The mountain wind was chill, too, for all that the sun had shone throughout the midsummer day. It was well to sit before the peat-fire.

The croft was on the slope of a mountain and had the south upon it. North, south, east, and west, other great slopes reached upward like hollow green waves frozen into silence by the very wind that curved them so, and freaked their crests into peaks and jagged pinnacles. Stillness was in that place for ever and ever. What though the Gorromalt Water foamed down Ben Nair, where the croft was, and made a hoarse voice for aye surrendering sound to silence? What though at times the stones fell from the ridges of Ben Chaisteal and Maolmòr, and clattered down the barren declivities till they were slung in the tangled meshes of whin and juniper? What though on stormy dawns the eagle screamed as he fought against the wind that graved a thin line upon the aged front of Ben Mulad, where his eyrie was: or that the kestrel cried above the

[1] From "The Sin-Eater," and "Washer of the Ford," Vol. II of the Collected Edition of "Fiona Macleod" (William Sharp). Published by Duffield & Company. By permission of Mrs. William Sharp.

rabbit-burrows in the strath: or that the hill-fox barked, or that the curlew wailed, or that the scattered sheep made an endless mournful crying? What were these but the ministers of silence?

There was no blue smoke in the strath except from the one turf cot. In the hidden valley beyond Ben Nair there was a hamlet, and nigh upon three-score folk lived there; but that was over three miles away. Sheen nic Lèoid was alone in that solitary place, save for her son Alasdair Mòr Og. "Young Alasdair" he was still, though the grey feet of fifty years had marked his hair. Alasdair Og he was while Alasdair Ruadh mac Chalum mhic Lèoid, that was his father, lived. But when Alasdair Ruadh changed, and Sheen was left a mourning woman, he that was their son was Alasdair Og still.

She had sore weariness that day. For all that, it was not the weight of the burden that made her go in and out of the afternoon sun, and sit by the red glow of the peats, brooding deep.

When, nigh upon an hour later, Alasdair came up the slope, and led the kye to the byre, she did not hear him: nor had she sight of him, when his shadow flickered in before him and lay along the floor.

"Poor old woman," he said to himself, bending his head because of the big height that was his, and he there so heavy and strong, and tender, too, for all the tangled black beard and the wild hill-eyes that looked out under bristling grey-black eyebrows.

"Poor old woman, and she with the tired heart that she has. Aye, aye, for sure the weeks lap up her shadow, as the sayin' is. She will be thinking of him that is gone. Aye, or maybe the old thoughts of her are goin' back on their own steps, down this glen an' over that hill an' away beyont that strath, an' this corrie an' that moor. Well, well, it is a good love, that of the mother. Sure a bitter pain it will be to me when there's no old grey hair there to stroke. It's quiet here, terrible quiet, God knows, to Himself be the blessin' for this an' for that; but when she has the white sleep at last, then it'll be a sore day for me, an'

one that I will not be able to bear to hear the sheep callin', callin', callin' through the rain on the hills here, and Gorromalt Water an' no other voice to be with me on that day of the days."

She heard a faint sigh, and stirred a moment, but did not look round.

"Muim'-à-ghraidh, is it tired you are, an' this so fine a time, too?"

With a quick gesture, the old woman glanced at him.

"Ah, child, is that you indeed? Well, I am glad of that, for I have the trouble again."

"What trouble, Muim' ghaolaiche?"

But the old woman did not answer. Wearily she turned her face to the peat-glow again.

Alasdair seated himself on the big wooden chair to her right. For a time he stayed silent thus, staring into the red heart of the peats. What was the gloom upon the old heart that he loved? What trouble was it?

At last he rose and put meal and water into the iron pot, and stirred the porridge while it seethed and sputtered. Then he poured boiling water upon the tea in the brown jenny, and put the new bread and the sweet-milk scones on the rude deal board that was the table.

"Come, dear tired old heart," he said, "and let us give thanks to the Being."

"Blessings and thanks," she said, and turned round.

Alasdair poured out the porridge, and watched the steam rise. Then he sat down, with a knife in one hand and the brown-white loaf in the other.

"Oh God," he said, in the low voice he had in the kirk when the Bread and Wine were given—"Oh God, be giving us now thy blessing, and have the thanks. And give us peace."

Peace there was in the sorrowful old eyes of the mother. The two ate in silence. The big clock that was by the bed *tick-tacked, tick-tacked.* A faint sputtering came out of a peat that had bog-gas in it. Shadows moved in the silence, and met and whispered and moved into deep, warm darkness. There was peace.

There was still a red flush above the hills in the west when the mother and son sat in the ingle again.

"What is it, mother-my-heart?" Alasdair asked at last, putting his great red hand upon the woman's knee.

She looked at him for a moment. When she spoke she turned away her gaze again.

"Foxes have holes, and the fowls of the air have their places of rest, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head."

"And what then, dear? Sure, it is the deep meaning you have in that grey old head that I'm loving so."

"Aye, lennav-aghray, there is meaning to my words. It is old I am, and the hour of my hours is near. I heard a voice outside the window last night. It is a voice I will not be hearing, no, not for seventy years. It was cradle-sweet, it was."

She paused, and there was silence for a time.

"Well, dear," she began again, wearily, and in a low, weak voice, "it is more tired and more tired I am every day now this last month. Two Sabbaths ago I woke, and there were bells in the air: and you are for knowing well, Alasdair, that no kirk-bells ever rang in Straith-Nair. At edge o' dark on Friday, and by the same token the thirteenth day it was, I fell asleep, and dreamed the mools were on my breast, and that the roots of the white daisies were in the hollows where the eyes were that loved you, Alasdair, my son."

The man looked at her with troubled gaze. No words would come. Of what avail to speak when there is nothing to be said? God sends the gloom upon the cloud, and there is rain: God sends the gloom upon the hill, and there is mist: God sends the gloom upon the sun, and there is winter. It is God, too, sends the gloom upon the soul, and there is change. The swallow knows when to lift up her wing over against the shadow that creeps out of the north: the wild swan knows when the smell of snow is behind the sun: the salmon, lone in the brown pool among the hills, hears the deep sea, and his tongue pants for salt, and his fins quiver, and he knows that his time is come, and that the

sea calls. The doe knows when the fawn hath not yet quaked in her belly: is not the violet more deep in the shadowy dewy eyes? The woman knows when the babe hath not yet stirred a little hand: is not the wild-rose on her cheek more often seen, and are not the shy tears moist on quiet hands in the dusk? How, then, shall the soul not know when the change is nigh at last? Is it a less thing than a reed, which sees the yellow birch-gold adrift on the lake, and the gown of the heather grow russet when the purple has passed into the sky, and the white bog-down wave grey and tattered where the loneroid grows dark and pungent—which sees, and knows that the breath of the Death-Weaver at the Pole is fast faring along the frozen norland peaks. It is more than a reed, it is more than a wild doe on the hills, it is more than a swallow lifting her wing against the coming of the shadow, it is more than a swan drunken with the savour of the blue wine of the waves when the green Arctic lawns are white and still. It is more than these, which has the Son of God for brother, and is clothed with light. God doth not extinguish at the dark tomb what he hath litten in the dark womb.

Who shall say that the soul knows not when the bird is aweary of the nest, and the nest is aweary of the wind? Who shall say that all portents are vain imaginings? A whirling straw upon the road is but a whirling straw: yet the wind is upon the cheek almost ere it is gone.

It was not for Alasdair Og, then, to put a word upon the saying of the woman that was his mother, and was age-white, and could see with the seeing of old wise eyes.

So all that was upon his lips was a sigh, and the poor prayer that is only a breath out of the heart.

"You will be telling me, grey sweetheart," he said lovingly, at last—"you will be telling me what was behind the word that you said: that about the foxes that have holes for the hiding, poor beasts, and the birdeens wi' their nests, though the Son o' Man hath not where to lay his head?"

"Aye, Alasdair, my son that I bore long syne an' that I'm leaving soon, I will be for telling you that thing, for I am knowing what is in the dark this night o' the nights."

Old Sheen put her head back wearily on the chair, and let her hands lie, long and white, palm-downward upon her knees. The peat-glow warmed the dull grey that lurked under her closed eyes and about her mouth, and in the furrowed cheeks. Alasdair moved nearer and took her right hand in his, where it lay like a tired sheep between two scarped rocks. Gently he smoothed her hand, and wondered why so frail and slight a creature as this small old wizened woman could have mothered a great swarthy man like himself—he a man now, with his two score and ten years, and yet but a boy there at the dear side of her.

"It was this way, Alasdair-mochree," she went on in her low thin voice—like a wind-worn leaf, the man that was her son thought. "It was this way. I went down to the burn to wash the *claar,* and when I was there I saw a wounded fawn in the bracken. The big sad eyes of it were like those of Maisie, poor lass, when she had the birthing that was her going-call. I went through the bracken, and down by the Gorromalt, and into the Glen of the Willows.

"And when I was there, and standing by the running water, I saw a man by the stream-side. He was tall, but spare and weary: and the clothes upon him were poor and worn. He had sorrow. When he lifted his head at me, I saw the tears. Dark, wonderful, sweet eyes they were. His face was pale. It was not the face of a man of the hills. There was no red in it, and the eyes looked in upon themselves. He was a fair man, with the white hands that a woman has, a woman like the Bantighearna of Glenchaisteal over yonder. His voice, too, was a voice like that: in the softness, and the sweet, quiet sorrow, I am meaning.

"The word that I gave him was in the English: for I thought he was like a man out of *Sasunn,* or of the southlands somewhere. But he answered me in the Gaelic: sweet, good Gaelic like that of the Bioball over there, to Himself be the praise.

" 'And it is the way down the Strath you are seeking,' I asked: 'and will you not be coming up to the house yonder, poor cot though it is, and have a sup of milk, and a rest if it's weary you are?'

"'You are having my thanks for that,' he said, 'and it is as though I had both the good rest and the cool sweet drink. But I am following the flowing water here.'

"'Is it for the fishing?' I asked.

"'I am a Fisher,' he said, and the voice of him was low and sad.

"He had no hat on his head, and the light that streamed through a rowan-tree was in his long hair. He had the pity of the poor in his sorrowful grey eyes.

"'And will you not sleep with us?' I asked again: 'that is, if you have no place to go to, and are a stranger in this country, as I am thinking you are; for I have never had sight of you in the home-straths before.'

"'I am a stranger,' he said, 'and I have no home, and my father's house is a great way off.'

"'Do not tell me, poor man,' I said gently, for fear of the pain, 'do not tell me if you would fain not; but it is glad I will be if you will give me the name you have.'

"'My name is Mac-an-t'-Saoir,' he answered with the quiet deep gaze that was his. And with that he bowed his head, and went on his way, brooding deep.

"Well, it was with a heavy heart I turned, and went back through the bracken. A heavy heart, for sure, and yet, oh peace too, cool dews of peace. And the fawn was there: healed, Alasdair, healed, and whinny-bleating for its doe, that stood on a rock wi' lifted hoof an' stared down the glen to where the Fisher was.

"When I was at the burnside, a woman came down the brae. She was fair to see, but the tears were upon her.

"'Oh,' she cried, 'have you seen a man going this way?'

"'Aye, for sure,' I answered, 'but what man would he be?'

"'He is called Mac-an-t'-Saoir."

"'Well, there are many men that are called Son of the Carpenter. What will his own name be?'

"'Iosa,' she said.

"And when I looked at her, she was weaving the wavy branches of a thorn near by, and sobbing low, and it was like a wreath or crown that she made.

"'And who will you be, poor woman?' I asked.

" 'Oh my Son, my Son,' she said and put her apron over her head and went down into the Glen of the Willows, she weeping sore, too, at that, poor woman.

"So now, Alasdair, my son, tell me what thought you have about this thing that I have told you. For I know well whom I met on the brae there, and who the Fisher was. And when I was at the peats here once more I sat down, and my mind sank into myself. And it is knowing the knowledge I am."

"Well, well, dear, it is sore tired you are. Have rest now. But sure there are many men called Macintyre."

"Aye, an' what Gael that you know will be for giving you his surname like that?"

Alasdair had no word for that. He rose to put some more peats on the fire. When he had done this, he gave a cry.

The whiteness that was on the mother's hair was now in the face. There was no blood there, or in the drawn lips. The light in the old, dim eyes was like water after frost.

He took her hand in his. Clay-cold it was. He let it go, and it fell straight by the chair, stiff as the cromak he carried when he was with the sheep.

"Oh my God and my God," he whispered, white with the awe, and the bitter cruel pain.

Then it was that he heard a knocking at the door.

"Who is there?" he cried hoarsely.

"Open, and let me in." It was a low, sweet voice, but was that grey hour the time for a welcome?

"Go, but go in peace, whoever you are. There is death here."

"Open, and let me in."

At that, Alasdair, shaking like a reed in the wind, unclasped the latch. A tall fair man, ill-clad and weary, pale, too, and with dreaming eyes, came in.

"*Beannachd Dhe an Tigh*," he said, "God's blessing on this house; and on all here."

"The same upon yourself," Alasdair said, with the weary pain in his voice. "And who will you be? and forgive the asking."

"I am called Mac-an-t'-Saoir, and Iosa is the name I bear—Jesus, the Son of the Carpenter."

"It is a good name. And is it good you are seeking this night?"

"I am a Fisher."

"Well, that's here an' that's there. But will you go to the Strath over the hill, and tell the good man that is there, the minister, Lachlan McLachlan, that old Sheen nic Lèoid, wife of Alasdair Ruadh, is dead."

"I know that, Alasdair Og."

"And how will you be knowing that, and my name too, you that are called Macintyre?"

"I met the white soul of Sheen as it went down by the Glen of the Willows a brief while ago. She was singing a glad song, she was. She had green youth in her eyes. And a man was holding her by the hand. It was Alasdair Ruadh."

At that Alasdair fell on his knees. When he looked up there was no one there. Through the darkness outside the door, he saw a star shining white, and leaping like a pulse.

It was three days after that day of shadow that Sheen nic Lèoid was put under the green turf.

On each night, Alasdair Og walked in the Glen of the Willows, and there he saw a man fishing, though ever afar off. Stooping he was, always, and like a shadow at times. But he was the man that was called Iosa Mac-an-t'-Saoir—Jesus, the Son of the Carpenter.

And on the night of the earthing he saw the Fisher close by.

"Lord God," he said, with the hush on his voice, and deep awe in his wondering eyes: "Lord God!"

And the Man looked at him.

"Night and day, Alasdair MacAlasdair," he said, "night and day I fish in the waters of the world. And these waters are the waters of grief, and the waters of sorrow, and the waters of despair. And it is the souls of the living I fish for. And lo, I say this thing unto you, for you shall not see me again: *Go in peace.* Go in peace, good soul of a poor man, for thou hast seen the Fisher of Men."

QUATTROCENTISTERIA

(How Sandra Botticelli Saw Simonetta in the Spring)

I

By Maurice Hewlett

UP at Fiesole among the olives and chestnuts which cloud the steeps, the magnificent Lorenzo was entertaining his guests on a morning in April. The olives were just whitening to silver; they stretched in a trembling sea down the slope. Beyond lay Florence, misty and golden; and round about were the mossy hills, cut sharp and definite against a grey-blue sky, printed with starry buildings and sober ranks of cypress. The sun catching the mosaics of San Miniato and the brazen cross on the façade, made them shine like sword-blades in the quiver of the heat between. For the valley was just a lake of hot air, hot and murky—"fever weather," said the people in the streets—with a glaring summer sun let in between two long spells of fog. 'Twas unnatural at that season, *via;* but the blessed Saints sent the weather and one could only be careful what one was about at sun-down.

Up at the Villa, with brisk morning airs rustling overhead, in the cool shades of trees and lawns, it was pleasant to lie still, watching these things, while a silky young exquisite sang to his lute a not too audacious ballad about Selvaggia, or Becchina and the saucy Prior of Sant' Onofrio. He sang well, too, that dark-eyed boy; the girl at whose feet he was crouched was laughing and blushing at once; and, being very fair, she blushed hotly. She dared not raise her eyes to look into his, and he knew it and was quietly measuring his strength—it was quite a comedy! At each wanton *refrain* he lowered his voice to a whisper

and bent a little forward. And the girl's laughter became hysterical; she was shaking with the effort to control herself. At last she looked up with a sort of sob in her breath and saw his mocking smile and the gleam of the wild beast in his eyes. She grew white, rose hastily and turned away to join a group of ladies sitting apart. A man with a heavy, rather sullen face and a bush of yellow hair falling over his forehead in a wave, was standing aside watching all this. He folded his arms and scowled under his big brows; and when the girl moved away his eyes followed her.

The lad ended his song in a broad sarcasm amid bursts of laughter and applause. The Magnificent, sitting in his carved chair, nursed his sallow face and smiled approval. "My brother boasts his invulnerability," he said, turning to his neighbour, "let him look to it, Messer Cupido will have him yet. Already, we can see, he has been let into some of the secrets of the bower." The man bowed and smiled deferentially. "Signor Giuliana has all the qualities to win the love of ladies, and to retain it. Doubtless he awaits his destiny. The Wise Man has said that 'Beauty . . .'" The young poet enlarged on his text with some fire in his thin cheeks, while the company kept very silent. It was much to their liking; even Giuliano was absorbed; he sat on the ground clasping one knee between his hands, smiling upwards into vacancy, as a man does whose imagination is touched. Lorenzo nursed his sallow face and beat time to the orator's cadences with his foot; he, too, was abstracted and smiling. At the end he spoke: "Our Marsilio himself has never said nobler words, my Agnolo. The mantle of the Attic prophet has descended indeed upon this Florence. And Beauty, as thou sayest, is from heaven. But where shall it be found here below, and how discerned?" The man of the heavy jowl was standing with folded arms, looking from under his brows at the group of girls. Lorenzo saw everything; he noticed him. "Our Sandro will tell us it is yonder. The Star of Genoa shines over Florence and our poor little constellations are gone out. *Ecco*, my Sandro, gravest and hardiest of painters,

go summon Madonna Simonetta and her handmaidens to our Symposium. Agnolo will speak further to us of this sovereignty of Beauty."

The painter bowed his head and moved away.

A green alley vaulted with thick ilex and myrtle formed a tapering vista where the shadows lay misty blue and pale shafts of light pierced through fitfully. At the far end it ran out into an open space and a splash of sunshine. A marble Ganymede with lifted arms rose in the middle like a white flame. The girls were there, intent upon some commerce of their own, flashing hither and thither over the grass in a flutter of saffron and green and crimson. Simonetta—Sandro could see—was a little apart, a very tall, isolated figure, clear and cold in a recess of shade, standing easily, resting on one hip with her hands behind her. A soft, straight robe of white clipped her close from shoulder to heel; the lines of her figure were thrust forward by her poise. His eye followed the swell of her bosom very gentle and girlish, and the long folds of her dress falling thence to her knee. While she stood there, proud and remote, a chance beam of the sun shone on her head so that it seemed to burn. "Heaven salutes the Queen of Heaven, —Venus Urania!" With an odd impulse he stopped, crossed himself, and then hurried on.

He told his errand to her; having no eyes for the others.

"Signorina—I am to acquaint her Serenity that the divine poet Messer Agnolo is to speak of the sovereign power of beauty; of the Heavenly Beauty whereof Plato taught, as it is believed."

Simonetta arched a slim neck and looked down at the obsequious speaker, or at least he thought so. And he saw how fair she was, a creature how delicate and gracious, with grey eyes frank and wide, and full red lips where a smile (nervous and a little wistful, he judged, rather than defiant) seemed always to hover. Such clear-cut, high beauty made him ashamed; but her colouring (for he was a painter) made his heart beat. She was no ice-bound shadow of deity then! but flesh and blood; a girl—a child, of timid, soft contours, of warm roses and blue veins laced

in a pearly skin. After she was crowned with a heavy wealth of red-gold hair, twisted in great coils, bound about with pearls, and smouldering like molten metal where it fell rippling along her neck. She dazzled him, so that he could not face her or look further. His eyes dropped. He stood before her moody, disconcerted.

The girls, who had dissolved their company at his approach, listened to what he had to say linked in knots of twos and threes. They needed no excuses to return; some were philosophers in their way, philosophers and poetesses; some had left their lovers in the ring round Lorenzo. So they went down the green alley still locked by the arms, by the waist or shoulders. They did not wait for Simonetta. She was a Genoese, and proud as the snow. Why did Giuliano love her? *Did* he love her, indeed? He was bewitched then, for she was cold, and a brazen creature in spite of it. How dare she bare her neck so! Oh! 'twas Genoese, "Uomini senza fede e donne senze vergogna," they quoted as they ran.

And Simonetta walked alone down the way with her head high; but Sandro stepped behind, at the edge of her trailing white robe. . . .

. . . The poet was leaning against an ancient alabaster vase, soil-stained, yellow with age and its long sojourn in the loam, but with traces of its carved garlands clinging to it still. He fingered it lovingly as he talked. His oration was concluding, and his voice rose high and tremulous; there were sparks in his hollow eyes. . . . "And as this sovereign Beauty is queen of herself, so she is subject to none other, owns to no constraining custom, fears no reproach of man. What she wills, that has the force of a law. Being Beauty, her deeds are lovely and worshipful. Therefore Phryne, whom men, groping in darkness and the dull ways of earth, dubbed courtesan, shone in a Court of Law before the assembled nobles of Athens, naked and undismayed in the blaze of her fairness. And Athens discerned the goddess and trembled. Yes, and more; even as Aphrodite, whose darling she was, arose pure from the foam, so she too came up out of the sea in the presence of a host, and

the Athenians, seeing no shame, thought none, but, rather, reverenced her the more. For what shame is it that the body of one so radiant in clear perfections should be revealed? Is then the garment of the soul, her very mould and image, so shameful? Shall we seek to know her essence by the garment of a garment, or hope to behold that which really is in the shadows we cast upon shadows? Shame is of the brute dullard who thinks shame. The evil ever sees Evil glaring at him. Plato, the golden-mouthed, with the soul of pure fire, has said the truth of this matter in his *De Republicâ*, the fifth book, where he speaks of young maids sharing the exercise of the Palæstra, yea, and the Olympic contests even! For he says, 'Let the wives of our wardens bare themselves, for their virtue will be a robe; and let them share the toils of war and defend their country. And for the man who laughs at naked women exercising their bodies for high reasons, his laughter is a fruit of unripe wisdom, and he himself knows not what he is about; for that is ever the best of sayings that the useful is the noble and the hurtful the base.' . . ."

There was a pause. The name of Plato had had a strange effect upon the company. You would have said they had suddenly entered a church and had felt all lighter interests sink under the weight of the dim, echoing nave. After a few moments the poet spoke again in a quieter tone, but his voice had lost none of the unction which had enriched it. . . . "Beauty is queen: by the virtue of Deity, whose image she is, she reigns, lifts up, fires. Let us beware how we tempt Deity lest we perish ourselves. Actæon died when he gazed unbidden upon the pure body of Artemis; but Artemis herself rayed her splendour upon Endymion, and Endymion is among the immortals. We fall when we rashly confront Beauty, but that Beauty who comes unawares may nerve our souls to wing to heaven." He ended on a resonant note, and then, still looking out over the valley, sank into his seat. Lorenzo, with a fine humility, got up and kissed his thin hand. Giuliano looked at Simonetta, trying to recall her gaze, but she remained standing in her place, seeing nothing of her companions. She was

thinking of something, frowning a little and biting her lip, her hands before her; her slim fingers twisted and locked themselves nervously, like a tangle of snakes. Then she tossed her head, as a young horse might, and looked at Giuliano suddenly, full in the eyes. He rose to meet her with a deprecating smile, cap in hand—but she walked past him, almost brushing him with her gown, but never flinching her full gaze, threaded her way through the group to the back, behind the poet, where Sandro was. He had seen her coming, indeed he had watched her furtively throughout the oration, but her near presence disconcerted him again—and he looked down. She was strongly excited with her quick resolution; her colour had risen and her voice faltered when she began to speak. She spoke eagerly, running her words together.

"*Ecco,* Messer Sandro," she whispered blushing. "You have heard these sayings. . . . Who is there in Florence like me?"

"There is no one," said Sandro simply.

"I will be your Lady Venus," she went on breathlessly. "You shall paint me, rising from the sea-foam. . . . The Genoese love the sea." She was still eager and defiant; her bosom rose and fell unchecked.

"The Signorina is mocking me; it is impossible; the Signorina knows it."

"Eh, *Madonna!* is it so shameful to be fair—Star of the Sea as your poets sing at evening? Do you mean that I dare not do it? Listen then, Signor Pittore; to-morrow morning at mass-time you will come to the Villa Vespucci with your brushes and pans and you will ask for Monna Simonetta. Then you will see. Leave it now; it is settled." And she walked away with her head high and the same superb smile on her red lips. Mockery! She was in dead earnest; all her child's feelings were in hot revolt. These women who had whispered to each other, sniggered at her dress, her white neck and her free carriage; Giuliano who had presumed so upon her candour—these prying, censorious Florentines—she would strike them dumb with her amazing loveliness. They sang her a goddess that she

might be flattered and suffer their company: she would show herself a goddess indeed—the star of her shining Genoa, where men were brave and silent and maidens frank like the sea. Yes, and then she would withdraw herself suddenly and leave them forlorn and dismayed.

As for Sandro, he stood where she had left him, peering after her with a mist in his eyes. He seemed to be looking over the hill-side, over the city glowing afar off gold and purple in the hot air, to Mont' Oliveto and the heights, where a line of black cypresses stood about a low white building. At one angle of the building was a little turret with a belvedere of round arches. The tallest cypress just topped the windows. There his eyes seemed to rest.

II

At mass-time Sandro, folded in his shabby green cloak, stepped into the sun on the Ponte Vecchio. The morning mists were rolling back under the heat; you began to see the yellow line of houses stretching along the turbid river on the far side, and frowning down upon it with blank, mud-stained faces. Above, through steaming air, the sky showed faintly blue and a *campanile* to the right loomed pale and uncertain like a ghost. The sound of innumerable bells floated over the still city. Hardly a soul was abroad; here and there a couple of dusty peasants were trudging in with baskets of eggs and jars of milk and oil; a boat passed down to the fishing, and the oar knocked sleepily in the rowlock as she cleared the bridge. And above, on the heights of Mont' Oliveto, the tapering forms of cypresses were faintly outlined—straight bars of shadow—and the level ridge of a roof ran lightly back into the soft shroud.

Sandro could mark these things as he stepped resolutely on to the bridge, crossed it, and went up a narrow street among the sleeping houses. The day held golden promise; it was the day of his life! Meantime the mist clung to him and nipped him; what had fate in store? What was to be the issue? In the Piazza Santo Spirito, grey and hollow-sounding in the chilly silences, his own footsteps echoed

solemnly as he passed by the door of the great ragged church. Through the heavy darkness within lights flickered faintly and went; service was not begun. A drab crew of cripples lounged on the steps yawning and shivering, and two country girls were strolling to the mass with brown arms round each other's waists. When Sandro's footfall clattered on the stones they stopped by the door looking after him and laughed to see his dull face and muffled figure. In the street beyond he heard a bell jingling, hasty, incessant; and soon a white-robed procession swept by him, fluttering vestments, tapers, and the Host under a canopy, silk and gold. Sandro snatched at his cap and dropped on his knees in the road, crouching low and muttering under his breath as the vision went past. He remained kneeling for a moment after it had gone, then crossed himself—forehead, breast, lip,—and hurried forward. . . . He stepped under the archway into the Court. There was a youth with a cropped head and swarthy neck lounging there teasing a spaniel. As the steps sounded on the flags he looked up; the old green cloak and clumsy shoes of the visitor did not interest him; he turned his back and went on with his game. Sandro accosted him—Was the Signorina at the house? The boy went on with his game. "Eh, Diavolo! I know nothing at all," he said.

Sandro raised his voice till it rang round the courtyard. "You will go at once and inquire. You will say to the Signorina that Sandro di Mariano Filipepi the Florentine painter is here by her orders; that he waits her pleasure below."

The boy had got up; he and Sandro eyed each other for a little space. Sandro was the taller and had the glance of a hawk. So the porter went. . . .

. . . Presently with throbbing brows he stood on the threshold of Simonetta's chamber. It was the turret room of the villa and its four arched windows looked through a leafy tracery over towards Florence. Sandro could see down below him in the haze the glitter of the Arno and the dusky dome of Brunelleschi cleave the sward of the

hills like a great burnished bowl. In the room itself there was tapestry, the Clemency of Scipio, with courtiers in golden cuirasses and tall plumes, and peacocks and huge Flemish horses—a rich profusion of crimson and blue drapery and stout limbed soldiery. On a bracket, above a green silk curtain, was a silver statuette of Madonna and the Bambino Gesù, with a red lamp flickering feebly before. By the windows a low divan heaped with velvet cushions and skins. But for a coffer and a prayer desk and a curtained recess which enshrined Simonetta's bed, the room looked wind-swept and bare.

When he entered Simonetta was standing by the window leaning her hand against the ledge for support. She was draped from top to toe in a rose-coloured mantle which shrouded her head like a nun's wimple and then fell in heavy folds to the ground. She flushed as he came in, but saluted him with a grave inclination. Neither spoke. The silent greeting, the full consciousness in each of their parts, gave a curious religious solemnity to the scene like some familiar but stately Church mystery. Sandro busied himself mechanically with his preparations—he was a lover and his pulse chaotic, but he had come to paint—and when these were done, on tip-toe, as it were, he looked timidly about him round the room, seeking where to pose her. Then he motioned her with the same reverential, preoccupied air, silent still, to a place under the silver Madonna. . . .

. . . There was a momentary quiver of withdrawal. Simonetta blushed vividly and drooped her eyes down to her little bare foot peeping out below the lines of the rosy cloak. The cloak's warmth shone on her smooth skin and rayed over her cheeks. In her flowery loveliness she looked diaphanous, ethereal; and yet you could see what a child she was, with her bright audacity, her ardour and her wilfulness flushing and paling about her like the dawn. There she stood trembling on the brink. . . .

Suddenly all her waywardness shot into her eyes; she lifted her arms and the cloak fell back like the shard of a young flower; then, delicate and palpitating as a silver reed, she stood up in the soft light of the morning, and the

sun, slanting in between the golden leaves and tendrils, kissed her neck and shrinking shoulder.

Sandro stood facing her, moody and troubled, fingering his brushes and bits of charcoal: his shaggy brows were knit, he seemed to be breathing hard. He collected himself with an effort and looked up at her as she stood before him shrinking, awe-struck, panting at the thing she had done. Their eyes met, and the girl's distress increased; she raised her hand to cover her bosom; her breath came in short gasps from parted lips, but her wide eyes still looked fixedly into his, with such blank panic that a sudden movement might really have killed her. He saw it all; she! there at his mercy. Tears swam and he trembled. Ah! the gracious lady! what divine condescension! what ineffable courtesy! But the artist in him was awakened almost at the same moment; his looks wandered in spite of her piteous candour and his own nothingness. Sandro the poet would have fallen on his face with an "Exi a me, nam peccator sum." Sandro the painter was different—no mercy there. He made a snatch at a carbon and raised his other hand with a kind of command—"Holy Virgin! what a line! Stay as you are, I implore you: swerve not one hair's breadth and I have you forever!" There was conquest in his voice.

So Simonetta stood very still, hiding her bosom with her hand, but never took her watch off the enemy. As he ran blindly about doing a hundred urgent indispensable things,—noting the lights, the line she made, how her arm cut across the folds of the curtain—she dogged him with staring, fascinated eyes, just as a hare, crouching in her form, watches a terrier hunting round her and waits for the end.

But the enemy was disarmed. Sandro the passionate, the lover, the brooding devotee, was gone; so was *la belle Simonetta* the beloved, the be-hymned. Instead, here was a fretful painter, dashing lines and broad smudges of shade on his paper, while before him rose an exquisite, slender, swaying form, glistening carnation and silver, and, over all, the maddening glow of red-gold hair. Could he but

catch those velvet shadows, those delicate, glossy, reflected lights! Body of Bacchus! How could he put them in! What a picture she was! Look at the sun on her shoulder! and her hair—Christ! how it burned! It was a curious moment. The girl who had never understood or cared to understand this humble lover, guessed now that he was lost in the artist. She felt that she was simply an effect and she resented it as a crowning insult. Her colour rose again, her red lips gathered into a pout. If Sandro had but known, she was his at that instant. He had but to drop the painter, throw down his brushes, set his heart and hot eyes bare—to open his arms and she would have fled into them and nestled there; so fierce was her instinct just then to be loved, she who had always been loved! But Sandro knew nothing and cared nothing. He was absorbed in the gracious lines of her body, the lithe long neck, the drooping shoulder, the tenderness of her youth; and then the grand open curve of the hip and thigh on which she was poised. He drew them in with a free hand in great sweeping lines, eagerly, almost angrily; once or twice he broke his carbon and—body of a dog!—he snatched at another.

This lasted a few minutes only: even Simonetta, with all her maiden tremors still feverishly acute, hardly noticed the flight of time; she was so hot with the feeling of her wrongs, the slight upon her victorious fairness. Did she not *know* how fair she was? She was very angry; she had been made a fool of. All Florence would come and gape at the picture and mock her in the streets with bad names and coarse gestures as she rode by. She looked at Sandro. Santa Maria! how hot he was! His hair was drooping over his eyes! He tossed it back every second! And his mouth was open, one could see his tongue working! Why had she not noticed that great mouth before? 'Twas the biggest in all Florence. Oh! why had he come? She was frightened, remorseful, a child again, with a trembling pathetic mouth and shrinking limbs. And then her heart began to beat under her slim fingers. She pressed them down into her flesh to stay those great mas-

terful throbs. A tear gathered in her eye; larger and larger it grew, and then fell. A shining drop rested on the round of her cheek and rolled slowly down her chin to her protecting hand, and lay there half hidden, shining like a rain-drop between two curving petals of a rose.

It was just at that moment the painter looked up from his work and shook his bush of hair back. Something in his sketch had displeased him; he looked up frowning, with a brush between his teeth. When he saw the tear-stained, distressful, beautiful face it had a strange effect upon him. He dropped nerveless, like a wounded man, to his knees, and covered his eyes with his hands. "Ah, Madonna! for the pity of heaven forgive me! forgive me! I have sinned, I have done thee fearful wrong; I, who still dare to love thee." He uncovered his face and looked up radiant: his own words had inspired him. "Yes," he went on, with a steadfast smile, "I, Sandro, the painter, the poor devil of a painter, have seen thee and I dare to love!" His triumph was short-lived. Simonetta had grown deadly white, her eyes burned, she had forgotten herself. She was tall and slender as a lily, and she rose, shaking, to her height.

"Thou presumest strangely," she said, in a slow still voice, "Go! Go in peace!"

She was conqueror. In her calm scorn, she was like a young immortal, some cold victorious Cynthia whose chastity had been flouted. Sandro was pale, too: he said nothing and did not look at her again. She stood quivering with excitement, watching him with the same intent alertness as he rolled up his paper and crammed his brushes and pencils into the breast of his jacket. She watched him still as he backed out of the room and disappeared through the curtains of the archway. She listened to his footsteps along the corridor, down the stair. She was alone in the silence of the sunny room. Her first thought was for her cloak; she snatched it up and veiled herself shivering as she looked fearfully round the walls. And then she flung herself on the piled cushions before the window and sobbed piteously, like an abandoned child.

The sun slanted in between the golden leaves and tendrils and played in the tangle of her hair. . .

III

At ten o'clock on the morning of April the twenty-sixth, a great bell began to toll: two beats heavy and slow, and then silence, while the air echoed the reverberation, moaning. Sandro, in shirt and breeches, with bare feet spread broad, was at work in his garret on the old bridge. He stayed his hand as the strong tone struck, bent his head and said a prayer: "Miserere ei, Domine; requiem eternam dona, Domine;" the words came out of due order as if he was very conscious of their import. Then he went on. And the great bell went on; two beats together, and then silence. It seemed to gather solemnity and a heavier message as he painted. Through the open window a keen draught of air blew in with dust and a scrap of shaving from the Lung' Arno down below; it circled round his workshop, fluttering the sketches and rags pinned to the walls. He looked out on a bleak landscape—San Miniato in heavy shade, and the white houses by the river staring like dead faces. A strong breeze was abroad; it whipped the brown water and raised little curling billows, ragged and white at the edges, and tossed about snaps of surf. It was cold. Sandro shivered as he shut to his casement; and the stiffening gale rattled at it fitfully. Once again it thrust it open, bringing wild work among the litter in the room. He made fast with the rain driving in his face. And above the howling of the squall he heard the sound of the great bell, steady and unmoved as if too full of its message to be put aside. Yet it was coming to him athwart the wind.

Sandro stood at his casement and looked at the weather—beating rain and yeasty water. He counted, rather nervously, the pulses between each pair of the bell's deep tones. He was impressionable to circumstances, and the coincidence of storm and passing-bell awed him. . . . "Either the God of Nature suffers or the fabric of the world is

breaking;"—he remembered a scrap of talk wafted towards him (as he stood in attendance) from some humanist at Lorenzo's table only yesterday, above the light laughter and snatches of song. That breakfast party at the Camaldoli yesterday! What a contrast—the even spring weather with the sun in a cloudless sky, and now this icy dead morning with its battle of wind and bell, fighting, he thought,—over the failing breath of some strong man. Man! God, more like. "The God of Nature suffers," he murmured as he turned to his work. . . .

Simonetta had not been there yesterday. He had not seen her, indeed, since that nameless day when she had first transported him with the radiance of her bare beauty and then struck him down with a level gaze from steel-cold eyes. And he had deserved it, he had—she had said —"presumed strangely." Three more words only had she uttered and he had slunk out from her presence like a dog. What a Goddess! Venus Urania! So she, too, might have ravished a worshipper as he prayed, and, after, slain him for a careless word. Cruel? No, but a Goddess. Beauty had no laws; she was above them. Agnolo himself had said it, from Plato. . . . Holy Michael! What a blast! Black and desperate weather. . . . "Either the God of Nature suffers." . . . God shield all Christian souls on such a day! . . .

One came and told him Simonetta Vespucci was dead. Some fever had torn at her and raced through all her limbs, licking up her life as it passed. No one had known of it—it was so swift! But there had just been time to fetch a priest! Fra Matteo, they said, from the Carmine, had shrived her ('twas a bootless task, God knew, for the child had babbled so, her wits wandered, look you), and then he had performed the last office. One had fled to tell the Medici. Giuliano was wild with grief; 'twas as if *he* had killed her instead of the Spring-ague—but then, people said he loved her well! And our Lorenzo had bid them swing the great bell of the Duomo—Sandro had heard it perhaps?—and there was to be a public procession, and a Requiem sung at Santa Croce before they took

her back to Genoa to lie with her fathers. Eh! Bacchus!' She was fair and Giuliano had loved her well. 'Twas natural enough then. So the gossip ran out to tell his news to more attentive ears, and Sandro stood in his place, intoning softly "Te Deum Laudamus."

He understood it all. There had been a dark and awful strife—earth shuddering as the black shadow of death swept by. Through tears now the sun beamed broad over the gentle city where she lay lapped in her mossy hills. "Lux eterna lucet ei," he said with a steady smile; "atque lucebit," he added after a pause. He had been painting that day an agonizing Christ, red and languid, crowned with thorns. Some of his own torment seems to have entered it, for, looking at it now, we see, first of all, wild eyeballs staring with the mad earnestness, the purposeless intensity of one seized or "possessed." He put the panel away and looked about for something else, the sketch he had made of Simonetta on that last day. When he had found it he rolled it straight and set it on his easel. It was not the first charcoal study he had made from life, but a brush drawing on dark paper, done in sepia-wash and the lights in white lead. He stood looking into it with his hands clasped. About half a braccia high, faint and shadowy in the pale tint he had used, he saw her there victim rather than Goddess. Standing timidly and wistfully, shrinking rather, veiling herself, maiden-like, with her hands and hair, with lips trembling and dewy eyes, she seemed to him now an immortal who must needs suffer for some great end; live and suffer and die; live again, and suffer and die. It was a doom perpetual like Demeter's, to bear, to nurture, to lose and to find her Persephone. She had stood there immaculate and apprehensive, a wistful victim. Three days before he had seen her thus; and now she was dead. He would see her no more.

Ah! Yes, once more he would see her. . . .

. . . . . .

They carried dead Simonetta through the streets of Florence with her pale face uncovered and a crown of

myrtle in her hair. People thronging there held their breath, or wept to see such still loveliness; and her poor parted lips wore a patient little smile, and her eyelids were pale violet and lay heavy to her cheek. White, like a bride, with a nosegay of orange-blossom and syringa at her throat, she lay there on her bed with lightly folded hands and the strange aloofness and preoccupation all the dead have. Only her hair burned about her like a molten copper; and the wreath of myrtle leaves ran forward to her brows and leapt beyond them into a tongue.

The great procession swept forward; black brothers of Misericordia, shrouded and awful, bore the bed or stalked before it with torches that guttered and flared sootily in the dancing light of day. They held the pick of Florence, those scowling shrouds—Giuliano and Lorenzo, Pazzi, Tornabuoni, Soderini or Pulci; and behind, old Cattaneo, battered with storms, walked heavily, swinging his long arms and looking into the day's face as if he would try another fall with Death yet. Priests and acolytes, tapers, banners, vestments and a great silver Crucifix, they drifted by, chanting the dirge for Simonetta; and she, as if for a sacrifice, lifted up on her silken bed, lay couched like a white flower, waxen, imperturbable, edged with the colour of flame. . . .

. . . Santa Croce, the great church, stretched forward beyond her into distances of grey mist and cold spaces of light. Its bare vastness was damp like a vault. And she lay in the midst listless, heavy-lidded, apart, with the half-smile, as it seemed, of some secret mirth. Round her the great candles smoked and flickered, and mass was sung at the High Altar for her soul's repose. Sandro stood alone facing the shining altar but looking fixedly at Simonetta on her couch. He was white and dry—parched lips and eyes that ached and smarted. Was this the end? Was it possible, my God! that the transparent, unearthly thing lying there so prone and pale was dead? Had such loveliness aught to do with life or death? Ah! sweet lady, dear heart, how tired she was, how deadly tired! From where he stood he could see with intolerable anguish the

sombre rings round her eyes and the violet shadows on the lids, her folded hands and the straight, meek line to her feet. And her poor wan face with its wistful, pitiful little smile was turned half aside on the delicate throat, as if in a last appeal:—"Leave me now, O Florentines, to my rest. I have given you all I had: ask no more. I was a young girl, a child; too young for your eager strivings. You have killed me with your play; let me be now, let me sleep!" Poor child! Poor child! Sandro was on his knees with his face pressed against the pulpit and tears running through his fingers as he prayed. . . .

As he had seen her, so he painted. As at the beginning of life in a cold world, passively meeting the long trouble of it, he painted her a rapt Presence floating evenly to our earth. A grey, translucent sea laps silently upon a little creek and, in the hush of a still dawn, the myrtles and sedges on the water's brim are quiet. It is a dream in half tones that he gives us, grey and green and steely blue; and just that, and some homely magic of his own, hint the commerce of another world with man's discarded domain. Men and women are asleep, and as in an early walk you may startle the hares at their play, or see the creatures of the darkness—owls and night hawks and heavy moths—flit with fantastic purpose over the familiar scene, so here it comes upon you suddenly that you have surprised Nature's self at her mysteries; you are let into the secret; you have caught the spirit of the April woodland as she glides over the pasture to the copse. And that, indeed, was Sandro's fortune. He caught her in just such a propitious hour. He saw the sweet wild thing, pure and undefiled by touch of earth; caught her in that pregnant pause of time ere she had lighted. Another moment and a buxom nymph of the grove would fold her in a rosy mantle, coloured as the earliest wood-anemones are. She would vanish, we know, into the daffodils or a bank of violets. And you might tell her presence there, or in the rustle of the myrtles, or coo of doves mating in the pines; you might feel her genius in the scent of the earth or the kiss of the West wind; but you could only see her in

mid-April, and you should look for her over the sea. She always comes with the first warmth of the year.

But daily, before he painted, Sandro knelt in a dark chapel in Santa Croce, while a blue-chinned priest said mass for the repose of Simonetta's soul.

THE STOLEN BACILLUS

By H. G. Wells

"THIS again," said the Bacteriologist, slipping a glass slide under the microscope, "is a preparation of the celebrated Bacillus of cholera—the cholera germ."

The pale-faced man peered down the microscope. He was evidently not accustomed to that kind of thing, and held a limp white hand over his disengaged eye. "I see very little," he said.

"Touch this screw," said the Bacteriologist; "perhaps the microscope is out of focus for you. Eyes vary so much. Just the fraction of a turn this way or that."

"Ah! now I see," said the visitor. "Not so very much to see, after all. Little streaks and shreds of pink. And yet these little particles, those mere atomies, might multiply and devastate a city! Wonderful!"

He stood up, and releasing the glass slip from the microscope, held it in his hand towards the window. "Scarcely visible," he said, scrutinising the preparation. He hesitated. "Are these—alive? Are they dangerous now?"

"Those have been stained and killed," said the Bacteriologist. "I wish, for my own part, we could kill and stain every one of them in the universe."

"I suppose," the pale man said with a slight smile, "that you scarcely care to have such things about you in the living—in the active state?"

"On the contrary, we are obliged to," said the Bacteriologist. "Here, for instance——" He walked across the room and took up one of several sealed tubes. "Here is the living thing. This is a cultivation of the actual living disease bacteria." He hesitated. "Bottled cholera, so to speak."

A slight gleam of satisfaction appeared momentarily in the face of the pale man. "It's a deadly thing to have in your possession," he said, devouring the little tube with his eyes. The Bacteriologist watched the morbid pleasure in his visitor's expression. This man, who had visited him that afternoon with a note of introduction from an old friend, interested him from the very contrast of their dispositions. The lank black hair and deep grey eyes, the haggard expression and nervous manner, the fitful yet keen interest of his visitor were a novel change from the phlegmatic deliberations of the ordinary scientific worker with whom the Bacteriologist chiefly associated. It was perhaps natural, with a hearer evidently so impressionable to the lethal nature of his topic, to take the most effective aspect of the matter.

He held the tube in his hand thoughtfully. "Yes, here is the pestilence imprisoned. Only break such a little tube as this into a supply of drinking-water, say to these minute particles of life that one must needs stain and examine with the highest powers of the microscope even to see, and that one can neither smell nor taste—say to them, 'Go forth, increase and multiply, and replenish the cisterns,' and Death—mysterious, untraceable Death, Death swift and terrible, Death full of pain and indignity—would be released upon this city, and go hither and thither seeking his victims. Here he would take the husband from the wife, here the child from its mother, here the statesman from his duty, and here the toiler from his trouble. He would follow the water-mains, creeping along streets, picking out and punishing a house here and a house there where they did not boil their drinking-water, creeping into the wells of the mineral-water makers, getting washed into salad, and lying dormant in ices. He would wait ready to be drunk in the horse-troughs, and by unwary children in the public fountains. He would soak into the soil, to reappear in springs and wells at a thousand unexpected places. Once start him at the water-supply, and before we could ring him in and catch him again he would have decimated the metropolis."

He stopped abruptly. He had been told rhetoric was his weakness.

"But he is quite safe here, you know—quite safe."

The pale-faced man nodded. His eyes shone. He cleared his throat. "These Anarchist—rascals," said he, "are fools, blind fools—to use bombs when this kind of thing is attainable. I think——"

A gentle rap, a mere light touch of the fingernails, was heard at the door. The Bacteriologist opened it. "Just a minute, dear," whispered his wife.

When he re-entered the laboratory his visitor was looking at his watch. "I had no idea I had wasted an hour of your time," he said. "Twelve minutes to four. I ought to have left here by half-past three. But your things were really too interesting. No, positively, I cannot stop a moment longer. I have an engagement at four."

He passed out of the room reiterating his thanks, and the Bacteriologist accompanied him to the door, and then returned thoughtfully along the passage to his laboratory. He was musing on the ethnology of his visitor. Certainly the man was not a Teutonic type nor a common Latin one. "A morbid product, anyhow, I am afraid," said the Bacteriologist to himself. "How he gloated on those cultivations of disease-germs!" A disturbing thought struck him. He turned to the bench by the vapour-bath, and then very quickly to his writing-table. Then he felt hastily in his pockets and then rushed to the door. "I may have put it down on the hall table," he said.

"Minnie!" he shouted hoarsely in the hall.

"Yes, dear," came a remote voice.

"Had I anything in my hand when I spoke to you, dear, just now?"

Pause.

"Nothing, dear, because I remember——"

"Blue ruin!" cried the Bacteriologist, and incontinently ran to the front door and down the steps of his house to the street.

Minnie, hearing the door slam violently, ran in alarm to the window. Down the street a slender man was get-

ting into a cab. The Bacteriologist, hatless, and in his carpet slippers, was running and gesticulating wildly towards this group. One slipper came off, but he did not wait for it. "He has gone *mad!*" said Minnie; "it's that horrid science of his;" and, opening the window, would have called after him. The slender man, suddenly glancing round, seemed struck with the same idea of mental disorder. He pointed hastily to the Bacteriologist, said something to the cabman, the apron of the cab slammed, the whip swished, the horse's feet clattered, and in a moment cab, and Bacteriologist hotly in pursuit, had receded up the vista of the roadway and disappeared round the corner.

Minnie remained straining out of the window for a minute. Then she drew her head back into the room again. She was dumbfounded. "Of course he is eccentric," she meditated. "But running about London—in the height of the season, too—in his socks!" A happy thought struck her. She hastily put her bonnet on, seized his shoes, went into the hall, took down his hat and light overcoat from the pegs, emerged upon the doorstep, and hailed a cab that opportunely crawled by. "Drive me up the road and round Havelock Crescent, and see if we can find a gentleman running about in a velveteen coat and no hat."

"Velveteen coat, ma'am, and no 'at. Very good, ma'am." And the cabman whipped up at once in the most matter-of-fact way, as if he drove to this address every day in his life.

Some few minutes later the little group of cabmen and loafers that collects round the cabmen's shelter at Haverstock Hill were startled by the passing of a cab with a ginger-coloured screw of a horse, driven furiously.

They were silent as it went by, and then as it receded —"That's 'Arry 'Icks. Wot's *he* got?" said the stout gentleman known as Old Tootles.

"He's a-using his whip, he is, *to* rights," said the 'ostler boy.

"Hullo!" said poor old Tommy Byles; "here's another bloomin' loonattic. Blowed if there ain't."

"It's old George," said Old Tootles, "and he's drivin' a loonattic, *as* you say. Ain't he a-clawin' out of the keb? Wonder if he's after 'Arry 'Icks?"

The group round the cabmen's shelter became animated. Chorus: "Go it, George!" "It's a race." "You'll ketch 'em!" "Whip up!"

"She's a goer, she is!" said the ostler boy.

"Strike me giddy!" said Old Tootles. "Here!" *I'm* a-goin' to begin in a minute. Here's another comin'. If all the kebs in Hampstead ain't gone mad this morning!"

"It's a fieldmale this time," said the ostler boy.

"She's a followin' *him*," said Old Tootles. "Usually the other way about."

"What's she got in her 'and?"

"Looks like a 'igh 'at."

"What a bloomin' lark it is! Three to one on old George," said the ostler boy. "Next!"

Minnie went by in a perfect roar of applause. She did not like it, but she felt that she was doing her duty, and whirled on down Haverstock Hill and Camden Town High Street, with her eyes ever intent on the animated view of old George, who was driving her vagrant husband so incomprehensively away from her.

The man in the foremost cab sat crouched in the corner, his arms tightly folded, and the little tube that contained such vast possibilities of destruction gripped in his hand. His mood was a singular mixture of fear and exultation. Chiefly he was afraid of being caught before he could accomplish his purpose, but behind this was a vaguer but larger fear of the awfulness of his crime. But his exultation far exceeded his fear. No Anarchist before him had ever approached this conception of his. Ravachol, Vaillant, all those distinguished persons whose fame he had envied dwindled into insignificance beside him. He had only to make sure of the water-supply, and break the little tube into a reservoir. How brilliantly he had planned it, forged the letter of introduction and got into the laboratory, and how brilliantly he had seized his opportunity! The world

should hear of him at last. All those people who had sneered at him, neglected him, preferred other people to him, found his company undesirable, should consider him at last. Death, death, death! They had always treated him as a man of no importance. All the world had been in a conspiracy to keep him under. He would teach them yet what it is to isolate a man. What was this familiar street? Great Saint Andrew's Street, of course! How fared the chase? He craned out of the cab. The Bacteriologist was scarcely fifty yards behind. That was bad. He would be caught and stopped yet. He felt in his pocket for money, and found half-a-sovereign. This he thrust up through the trap in the top of the cab into the man's face. "More," he shouted, "if only we get away."

The money was snatched out of his hand. "Right you are," said the cabman, and the trap slammed, and the lash lay along the glistening side of the horse. The cab swayed, and the Anarchist, half-standing under the trap, put the hand containing the little glass tube upon the apron to preserve his balance. He felt the brittle thing crack, and the broken half of it rang upon the floor of the cab. He fell back into the seat with a curse, and stared dismally at the two or three drops of moisture on the apron.

He shuddered.

"Well! I suppose I shall be the first. *Phew!* Anyhow, I shall be a Martyr. That's something. But it is a filthy death, nevertheless. I wonder if it hurts as much as they say."

Presently a thought occurred to him—he groped between his feet. A little drop was still in the broken end of the tube, and he drank that to make sure. It was better to make sure. At any rate, he would not fail.

Then it dawned upon him that there was no further need to escape the Bacteriologist. In Wellington Street he told the cabman to stop, and got out. He slipped on the step, and his head felt queer. It was rapid stuff, this cholera poison. He waved his cabman out of existence, so to speak, and stood on the pavement with his arms folded upon his breast awaiting the arrival of the Bacteriologist.

There was something tragic in his pose. The sense of imminent death gave him a certain dignity. He greeted his pursuer with a defiant laugh.

"Vive l'Anarchie! You are too late, my friend, I have drunk it. The cholera is abroad!"

The Bacteriologist from his cab beamed curiously at him through his spectacles. "You have drunk it! An Anarchist! I see now." He was about to say something more, and then checked himself. A smile hung in the corner of his mouth. He opened the apron of his cab as if to descend, at which the Anarchist waved him a dramatic farewell and strode off towards Waterloo Bridge, carefully jostling his infected body against as many people as possible. The Bacteriologist was so preoccupied with the vision of him that he scarcely manifested the slightest surprise at the appearance of Minnie upon the pavement with his hat and shoes and overcoat. "Very good of you to bring my things," he said, and remained lost in contemplation of the receding figure of the Anarchist.

"You had better get in," he said, still staring. Minnie felt absolutely convinced now that he was mad, and directed the cabman home on her own responsibility. "Put on my shoes? Certainly, my dear," said he, as the cab began to turn, and hid the strutting black figure, now small in the distance, from his eyes. Then suddenly something grotesque struck him, and he laughed. Then he remarked, "It is really very serious, though.

"You see, that man came to my house to see me, and he is an Anarchist. No—don't faint, or I cannot possibly tell you the rest. And I wanted to astonish him, not knowing he was an Anarchist, and took up a cultivation of that new species of Bacterium I was telling you of, that infest, and I think cause, the blue patches upon various monkeys; and, like a fool, I said it was Asiatic cholera. And he ran away with it to poison the water of London, and he certainly might have made things look blue for this civilised city. And now he has swallowed it. Of course, I cannot say what will happen, but you know it turned that kitten blue, and the three puppies—in patches, and the sparrow—bright

blue. But the bother is I shall have all the trouble and expense of preparing some more.

"Put on my coat on this hot day! Why? Because we might meet Mrs. Jabber. My dear, Mrs. Jabber is not a draught. But why should I wear a coat on a hot day because of Mrs. ———, Oh! *very* well."

OLD ÆSON

By Sir Arthur T. Quiller-Couch

JUDGE between me and my guest, the stranger within my gates, the man whom in his extremity I clothed and fed.

I remember well the time of his coming, for it happened at the end of five days and nights during which the year passed from strength to age; in the interval between the swallow's departure and the redwing's coming; when the tortoise in my garden crept into his winter quarters, and the equinox was on us, with an east wind that parched the blood in the trees, so that their leaves for once knew no gradations of red and yellow, but turned at a stroke to brown and crackled like tinfoil.

At five o'clock in the morning of the sixth day I looked out. The wind still whistled across the sky, but now without the obstruction of any cloud. Full in front of my window Sirius flashed with a whiteness that pierced the eye. A little to the right, the whole constellation of Orion was suspended clear over a wedgelike gap in the coast, wherein the sea could be guessed rather than seen. And, travelling yet further, the eye fell on two brilliant lights, the one set high above the other—the one steady and a fiery red, the other yellow and blazing intermittently—the one Aldebaran, the other revolving on the lighthouse top, fifteen miles away.

Half-way up the east, the moon, now in her last quarter and decrepit, climbed with the dawn close at her heels. And at this hour they brought in the Stranger, asking if my pleasure were to give him clothing and hospitality.

Nobody knew whence he came—except that it was from the wind and the night—seeing that he spoke in a strange tongue, moaning and making a sound like the twittering of birds in a chimney. But his journey must have been long and painful; for his legs bent under him, and he could not stand when they lifted him. So, finding it useless to question him for the time, I learned from the servants all they had to tell—namely, that they had come upon him, but a few minutes before, lying on his face within my grounds, without staff or scrip, bareheaded, spent, and crying feebly for succour in his foreign tongue; and that in pity they had carried him in and brought him to me.

Now for the look of this man, he seemed a century old, being bald, extremely wrinkled, with wide hollows where the teeth should be, and the flesh hanging loose and flaccid on his cheek-bones; and what colour he had could have come only from exposure to that bitter night. But his eyes chiefly spoke of his extreme age. They were blue and deep, and filled with the wisdom of years; and when he turned them in my direction they appeared to look through me, beyond me, and back upon centuries of sorrow and the slow endurance of man, as if his immediate misfortune were but an inconsiderable item in a long list. They frightened me. Perhaps they conveyed a warning of that which I was to endure at their owner's hands. From compassion, I ordered the servants to take him to my wife, with word that I wished her to set food before him, and see that it passed his lips.

So much I did for this Stranger. Now learn how he rewarded me.

He has taken my youth from me, and the most of my substance, and the love of my wife.

From the hour when he tasted food in my house, he sat there without hint of going. Whether from design, or because age and his sufferings had really palsied him, he came back tediously to life and warmth, nor for many days professed himself able to stand erect. Meanwhile he lived on the best of our hospitality. My wife tended him, and my

servants ran at his bidding; for he managed early to make them understand scraps of his language, though slow in acquiring ours—I believe out of calculation, lest some one should inquire his business (which was a mystery) or hint at his departure. I myself often visited the room he had appropriated, and would sit for an hour watching those fathomless eyes while I tried to make head or tail of his discourse. When we were alone, my wife and I used to speculate at times on his probable profession. Was he a merchant—an aged mariner—a tinker, tailor, beggar-man, thief? We could never decide, and he never disclosed.

Then the awakening came. I sat one day in the chair beside his, wondering as usual. I had felt heavy of late, with a soreness and languor in my bones, as if a dead weight hung continually on my shoulders, and another rested on my heart. A warmer color in the Stranger's cheek caught my attention; and I bent forward, peering under the pendulous lids. His eyes were livelier and less profound. The melancholy was passing from them as breath fades off a pane of glass. *He was growing younger.* Starting up, I ran across the room, to the mirror.

There were two white hairs in my fore-lock, and, at the corner of either eye, half a dozen radiating lines. I was an old man.

Turning, I regarded the Stranger. He sat phlegmatic as an Indian idol; and in my fancy I felt the young blood draining from my own heart, and saw it mantling in his cheeks. Minute by minute I watched the slow miracle—the old man beautified. As buds unfold, he put on a lovely youthfulness; and, drop by drop, left me winter.

I hurried from the room, and seeking my wife, laid the case before her. "This is a ghoul," I said, "that we harbour; he is sucking my best blood, and the household is clean bewitched." She laid aside the book in which she read and laughed at me. Now my wife was well-looking, and her eyes were the light of my soul. Consider, then, how I felt as she laughed, taking the Stranger's part against me. When I left her, it was with a new suspicion in my heart. "How shall

it be," I thought, "if, after stealing my youth, he go on to take the one thing that is better?"

In my room, day by day, I brooded upon this—hating my own alteration, and fearing worse. With the Stranger there was no longer any disguise. His head blossomed in curls; white teeth filled the hollows of his mouth; the pits in his cheeks were heaped full with roses, glowing under a transparent skin. It was Æson renewed and thankless; and he sat on, devouring my substance.

Now, having probed my weakness, and being satisfied that I no longer dared to turn him out, he, who had half imposed his native tongue upon us, constraining the household to a hideous jargon, the bastard growth of two languages, condescended to jerk us back rudely into our own speech once more, mastering it with a readiness that proved his former dissimulation, and using it henceforward as the sole vehicle of his wishes. On his past life he remained silent; but took occasion to confide in me that he proposed embracing a military career as soon as he should tire of the shelter of my roof.

And I groaned in my chamber; for that which I feared had come to pass. He was making open love to my wife. And the eyes with which he looked at her, and the lips with which he coaxed her, had been mine; and I was an old man. Judge now between me and this guest.

One morning I went to my wife; for the burden was past bearing, and I must satisfy myself. I found her tending the plants on her window-ledge; and when she turned, I saw that years had not taken from her comeliness one jot. And I was old.

So I taxed her on the matter of this Stranger, saying this and that, and how I had cause to believe he loved her.

"That is beyond doubt," she answered, and smiled.

"By my head, I believe his fancy is returned!" I blurted out.

And her smile grew radiant as, looking me in the face, she answered, "By my soul, husband, it is."

Then I went from her, down into my garden, where the day grew hot and the flowers were beginning to droop.

I stared upon them, and could find no solution to the problem that worked in my heart. And then I glanced up, eastward, to the sun above the privet-hedge, and saw *him* coming across the flower beds, treading them down in wantonness. He came with a light step and a smile, and I waited for him, leaning heavily on my stick.

"Give me your watch!" he called out as he drew near.

"Why should I give you my watch?" I asked, while something worked in my throat.

"Because I wish it; because it is gold; because you are too old, and won't want it much longer."

"Take it!" I cried, pulling the watch out and thrusting it into his hand. "Take it—you who have taken all that is better! Strip me; spoil me—"

A soft laugh sounded above, and I turned. My wife was looking down on us from the window, and her eyes were both moist and glad.

"Pardon me," she said, "it is you who are spoiling the child."

THE FIRE OF PROMETHEUS

By Henry W. Nevinson

THROUGH the long noon, while the sun marched as usual across the enormous sky—through the dead hours of the day, when thunder fell upon us like blows, and the lightning's white arm could hardly pierce the shrieking columns of the rain, I lay upon the mountain-side among the soldiers of a large army. In war, as in extreme grief, a numbness overcomes the spirit; the mind swoons under the stress of anxiety or pain; it can feel no more, and can realise no more. Situations which at other times would appear to it incredible and dreamlike with terror, are then quite natural, as though they came in the ordinary course. Horror, astonishment, the realisation of the truth—these are things that grow up afterwards, but for the time, perception and even fear are stifled by something, which is perhaps their own excess. My chief thought was a weary longing for the night. When would the night come to shelter us from that other shrieking storm which swept across the woof of drenching water? When would it come to lull that other thunder which rattled and paused and was renewed and died away and roared again with quickened rage as though in mortal haste for our destruction? Hour after hour I lay, peering vainly into the chaos of rain and lightning and invisible peril, while around me the air sang and growled with lead, and men died. The fate of an army, the issue of a war, depended on the mountain ridge where I was lying, and of such advantages as an attacking force can hold, the enemy had all. Yet I no more considered defeat than did the gods when the Titans set about their assault upon heaven, and the men around me

seemed to realise no more than myself either the importance of the struggle or its meaning to themselves.

Food, drink, and the coming night that would end our danger—those were the things we thought of; and among the coarse grass and rocks on which we lay, beetles and ants were hurrying up and down, seeking escape from the stormy rivulets of the rain.

Night came at last. Somewhere behind that whirling curtain of storm and war, the sun departed to light the tinkling lines of muleteers up quiet gorges of the Andes. Renewed now and again in spitting outbursts like the end of angry words, the firing slackened. In the gathering darkness, forms of unusual size began to move about. Men got up from invisible hiding-places and shook themselves, as though shaking off the fear of death. With just the same interest they tried to rub the slime from their knees. They spat, and turned their heads, and looked at each other. One or two whispered something, as people whisper in church or at a funeral. An officer came by, trying to walk as usual. He contrived to speak aloud after a few attempts, and fire and thunder mixed never fell on us with so strange a shock as the sound of his voice. The men watched him go as ghosts might watch a fellow-ghost in limbo, and his word of command was passed almost silently from mouth to mouth.

Tormented by thirst, I turned and scrambled down the hill to the narrow road which in peace time had led from one little village to another far away across the position we were defending. A mere track of loose stones and mud, it was now choked from end to end by all the chaos which eddies behind the course of battle: the wounded on stretchers dripping red, the wounded in carts, the wounded tottering back on their own feet, sobbing as they went; ammunition wagons with terrified and screaming mules; batteries taking position in reserve; dying horses being urged out of the way with whips and bayonets; broken-down limbers; reinforcements in companies threading their way to the front; orderlies trying in vain to gallop through the muddle of it all. Splashing along the gutter which the rain had

washed beside the road, I got among the scattered houses at last. Nearly all were dark and empty, but from the main church as I passed it came the cries of the wounded and the quiet hum of surgeons and attendants at their work. It had been suddenly turned into a hospital. Lights were burning inside, and cast the crimsons and golds of the stained windows upon the steaming, misty air. I don't know why the sight of those colours affected me so strangely then. Hunger and exhaustion may have given distinctness to the vision they called up, but to most people the outside of a lighted church at night is full of half-forgotten associations, and one of a child's first mysteries is the enchanted brilliance of the windows as he leaves the porch to the sound of the organ's voluntary.

In the midst of all the pain and wretchedness, there came to me the smell of an evening in early spring; and instead of the crowded and slushy track between the bare rock and the starveling houses appeared a gentle, gravelly road, guided by clipped hedgerows through plough and pasture from which a god could have scraped the fatted soil as a thrifty nurse scrapes off the children's butter. The horses waiting with the squire's carriage were like the land, their shining quarters all coated over with laps and folds of fatness. So were the congregation, who, having sung "A few more years shall roll," and prayed to be led through the desert here, came out of the church door, well clothed, well washed, well fed. Like the Ancient Mariner watching the water-snakes at play, I blessed them unaware. All had come to the service warmed and enlivened by their tea, and were now returning to supper with Sunday night's exhilaration of duty performed and tongues released from religious silence, whilst the collection-plate tinkled at the door. Issuing into blue air from the bright orange of the porch, lover signalled to lover under a silver star. So the ghostly but substantial procession passed out into a land of bread and flesh and milk and drinkable water, secure of the morrow, and rooted in a past of uninterrupted days. As I watched them move comfortably down the poignant ways of memory, I knew that an exactly similar procession would be crossing that an-

cient porch to-night (for it was Sunday); lovers would signal their meetings in the darkened lanes, the smell of violets would swim like dreams through the air, and from the fields the lambs cry sleepily. I wondered how it was possible for those people ever to be unhappy in their nestling homes. No misery seemed to count beside the wretchedness of war, and a longing for peace and all that peace means came over me. I longed for the tranquillity of the country lanes and the purple woods of spring; I longed for the spacious and quiet homes, for the silver smiling on the tablecloth and on the darkly gleaming sideboards, for the soft stir of women in the room and the faint smell of their hair and dresses, for the talking and quick laughter, for the clean sheets on wholesome beds, and the glad calling of the rooks when morning came above the elms.

In a dark and empty shed which was now my home, I drank deep of a bucket into which the rain was dripping through the roof, and began eating my half biscuit, very slowly, to make it last. I was full of vague and bitter rage—rage at the grit and sand in the biscuit, at the slimy floor and the sopping rug under which I had to sleep—rage at the risk of death, which might prevent me seeing anything I loved again. I prayed to witness the enemy's quick and entire overthrow, to watch them scattered over the hills and swept from the plains by our pursuing guns. Only over their dead could we win the road to happiness, and now they were actually attacking us, and on the rocks our dead lay almost as thick as theirs. It seemed as though a natural law had gone crazy. Full of irritation and angry fears of what the night would bring to succeed so horrible a day, I fell asleep with exhaustion, while a thin dust of water kept stealing down on me through the chinks of the boarding.

Hours passed before I woke, and then the rain had stopped and there was no more noise of wagons on the road. "Now is the time they'll renew the attack," I said wearily to myself; and getting up from the filthy ground I went out again into the night and wandered back towards a part of the front where I had not been before, though it

was a continuation of the same ridge which we had been defending. All was quiet now. Here and there I came upon little groups of our men along the line, stretched in sleep or huddled together for warmth, though the night was hot. Late and red the waning moon had risen, and it now gave an uncertain light, crossed by mists and films of moving cloud, the rear-guard of the storm. Stumbling over the rocks, I reached the further crest of the hill, where sentries were posted at intervals, and from there I could see down into the misty valley along which the enemy had come. Ridge after ridge of mountain stretched before me just discernible in the moonlight, and all looked so free and peaceful that war seemed an absurdity, and with the mere desire of escape, as from an iron ring, I began to creep down the steep hillside. The dead ground soon concealed me from above, and I there sat down to brood and to await what might happen before the dawn.

I waited long in the silence, and then I suddenly heard something like the gentle movement of a shy animal, and looking to the side I saw a figure stooping down over a dark object lying upon the ground. The figure appeared to be shaking a man by the shoulder as though to wake him up. I got my revolver ready in my hand, but uncertain whether it might not be one of our own sentries, I first said in a low voice, "Hullo, there! Why can't you let the poor fellow sleep?"

"I'm afraid I must," said the other without looking up: "yet it is but ten pulses of the blood since he was awake."

Sitting down, he raised the man's head and supported it on his knees, as gently as a woman moves her sleeping lover. I went and peered into the motionless face. Under the dim moon it was a blur of greenish white, like the moon herself.

"Why, he's one of the enemy!" I said, seeing the badge on his cap.

"No," the other answered; "he is dead." He took the man's hand, and one by one undid the tightly clenched fingers, stretching them out and watching them slowly curl together again.

"Look," he said, "touch this queer thing, and you will find it still warmish and limp. Only sixty pulses of the blood ago it was awake with life. See what peculiar stuff it is, solid and yet full of red and blue waters which have only just stopped running backwards and forwards—oh, far quicker than the waves upon a shore; a network substance of tender cords and jellies, finer than the loom, covered with a porous coating, more pliant than silk, and fitting closer than a light lady's robe. Five hooks, you see, with props and sticks of hollowed lime, pulleys and hinges complete, and tipped with horn. And all alive—'all but alive' still, as the honest fishmongers say—only three minutes ago quivering with the last beat of life. Only this morning it buttoned this jacket, or carried food to this poor mouth, just as the life devised, and far better than any contrivance man has ever made. But now nothing can set it moving ever again. I tried to hold in the life and keep it mingled with the body, I tried to catch it by the throat and prevent its escape. But while I clutched it tight, it was gone through my fingers. To feel it go was worse than a lover's longing which vanishes in waking. For the life had been there, and now it was not anywhere at all."

"Many things are sad, but death is not the saddest, and the poor fellow is only dead," I said, speaking like the chorus of a play.

"You are young compared to me, and therefore wise," he answered. "But this rough hand, now more perishable than a stone—what astonishing things it has done since it was pink and small, pressing against some mother's breast. Now it is lined and twisted and embrowned, just like a wild hawk's claw. Year after year it has harnessed the horse and ox, and scraped the mud from their coated fur. It has cloven the woods for fire and dug trenches where water should run. Inside it is hard and knotted with the plough and spade. It has shorn the wool from sheep, and flung the seeds of corn trustfully upon the earth. It has shovelled snow from the cottage door. It has heaped a road across the swampy fen. Steeped in filth, and caked with dust that clave to its sweat, it has seemed but a clod of

earth, more insensible than the cloven feet of oxen. Yet it has known pleasure better than the marble hands of gods. At the fire it has warmed itself, and after the heat of the day it has held the wine. It has touched the hands of other men, and stroked the lamb's-wool hair of children, and carried them along the weary road. Do you not suppose that it too has very likely throbbed with ecstasy at the touch of the beloved? Has it not embraced her, and been laid upon her heart, feeling the bell of her life ring muffled in her softness? What has the King of Babylon's hand done more or better than this poor bit of cold and greenish stuff which already is falling back into the earth it knew so well? Yet all such things he cast behind him, and in the assault was with the first, although the last to die. As he lay unnoticed in this cranny of the rocks, scorched by the sun and sodden by the rain, he knew all day long that he should never see his little farm again, or wake at dawn, or hear the voice of any woman."

"If he so valued his life," I said, "he should not have come out to battle."

"Do you not value your life?" he answered. "To him it was as sweet as to you. Do you wish never to see again the things and people you are fond of, or never again to do what most you like? It was for love of him that this coloured rag about his neck was made. He was among my worshippers; oh, why was he not content in all the good things I can give—in rising up and lying down, in love and pleasant food and all the deep laughter of the world? Now he lies here quenched. His beard and hair are matted with blood and water mixed, his clothes are rent into holes and coated with mud, his toes stick out through the fragments of his boots. What was it drove him on to leave his home and flocks and all he loved beside? In his heart there burned a raging fire. The Titans possessed him, and now like a Titan he lies prone."

"Poor fellow," I said, "he has met with a strange epitaph, who all his life was insignificant and unknown—now to be called a Titan when he is dead, and more insignificant still."

"I admit," he said, laughing, with a far-off look as though

he were calling up scenes long hidden; "I admit the outward resemblance is not very great. Dear and savage sons of earth, gigantic and uncouth, they wallowed in ocean, making it boil like a pot, and in their wrath or jollity they hurled mountains with all their trees from land to land. Black and red they were, and their fiery hair streamed upon the clouds as the sun went down in storm. With the sides of precipices they built their homes, and on beds of flat-topped hills they stretched their coiling limbs to rest, shaking their fists in exultation among the clouds when morning woke them. The joints of behemoth were their food, and with pails of foaming milk they washed down the slices of leviathan. The passion of their love shook the earth like earthquakes of the prime.

"Suddenly fate came—fate with the limits that conquer all things but the thoughts and desires of the soul. High in heaven, above the topmost mountains, the trim, white gods appeared, and against their fastidious pride those earth-born monsters raged in vain, breathing out defiance, lifting their wild arms against the sky, piling up their mountains that the height of heaven might be scaled. The lightning blazed. On sea and land their bodies writhed. Before they could say 'What is it?' the lightning blazed. Bolts of fire hissed in their fiery blood. Shrieking they lay as the tempest shrieks upon the cliffs when speeding over the sea it smites the armoured and creviced rocks with blow on blow, and to the thunder of the poles their roarings made answer. Precipices fell to cover them, and the weight of mountains hardly stilled the twistings of their pain. Solid beds of granite were molten with their rage. The crust of the world was turned to jelly. It rent and split, and through its chinks their nostrils breathed the sulphurous smoke of their anguish. Up from deep chasms they spat their boiling spittle against the sky. With their sighs they shot the depths of the sea aloft, so that weak water stood up straight upon a watery floor like the columns of the gods. Through their prisons of broad-based mountains their torturing fires burst the breathing-holes whence issued flame mixed with crags and fervent boulders and the melted water of adaman-

tine ores. Day and night for ever the smoke of their misery hung upon the mountain-tops. Their crimson indignation scorched the cool grey clouds that fluttered past, and brought them to earth like birds transfixed. As often as they turned their weary sides, the world shook and the crystal pinnacles of the hills toppled into ruin. So sprawled across the face of earth they lay in lengths of bleeding cinder."

He ceased, and drew the limbs of the dead man straight, removing some rough stones from beneath him, as though they could hurt him still. Then leaning over him, he sighed and said: "The outward resemblance indeed is small; but though he is so far greater than all the Titans, his fate is much the same, and he has won a crown like theirs."

"Your speech," I said, "is ever a journey varied by collisions."

Looking up like simplicity surprised, he answered: "But is it not a glorious crown to be well lamented? And the Titans, you know, had that advantage. Why, the whole circle of the world joined in lamentation for their ancient sovereignty—the days when things went merrily, though with some pleasing disorder. The dear Earth mourned over them, beweeping with bitter tears the pangs of children whose bones her young womb had formed. And did not the poet tell us that all who loved the wild young Earth mourned too—the wanderers of Asia, and those who pitch beside the lake at the world's edge, and the spearmen watching like eagles from the peaks above the gulf of nothingness. Was it not a crown of triumph to touch the hearts which none could tame—the breastless girls who lay the bow and not the baby to their side, and sweep across the desert, horse and limbs beclouded in their whirling hair? Or think of Atlas, upon whom fell the bitterest doom that can befall the damned—the doom of usefulness. Bound in steel, he propped the turning dome of heaven, and but for him the hosts of stars would have fluttered down upon the earth like twinkling snow. Yet the poet says:

> 'For him the waves of the sea are heard
> Moaning in cadence, and the precipitous gulf

> Groans, and the black chasm of the unseen world
> Mutters its deep-hid woe;
> Yea, from the holy streams a pitying voice
> Whispers of sorrow as they brightly go.'

Would you choose the acclamations of victory rather than be mourned like that? Crowns are of many kinds, and there are gods who linger with the weaker side. Let us therefore lament this man, as the Titans were lamented."

"With all my heart," I answered. "But, after all, the Titans were ignorant and mistaken. The gods were against them."

"Oh yes, I know," he sighed; "any one can see that now. There was one of them saw it at the time, and being neither ignorant nor mistaken himself, he even helped the gods. Yet in the end he fared no better for his foresight. There is a cliff in Caucasus. At its foot the innumerable waves are smiling. Above it moves the scorching sun, and darkness warps it with the frost. An eagle tears the heart that so loved mankind."

As he spoke, he undid the dead man's filthy and torn shirt, and smoothed the dark hair on his chest, down which the blood had trickled.

"Here, indeed," he said, "the fire of Prometheus has gone out. But have you never thought of fire how strange it is, how it multiplies itself more quickly than lovers, more quickly than the jelly of the sea, which splits and is two? With even greater similitude to itself it produces its young; for in a moment a hundred flames may spring, yet each will be the same flame as the first and as every other. Even if the first goes out, it lives identical and unappeased in all the rest. Of the same nature is the fire of Prometheus. Here it has gone out, but who knows how many flames may already have sprung from it?—each the same as itself, or differing only in brightness or colour according to the heart in which it dwells."

"I have heard," I said, "how the one intelligent Titan brought fire down from heaven to men, carrying it in a fennel-stalk, of all strange warming-pans, and how wofully

he suffered for his philanthropic ways. But I suppose the fire you now speak of is something different?"

"I am hardly sure," he answered, with his puzzled air. "For I have seen this inner fire make the inside of a face reflect its flame, just as a blazing log reddens the outside. And when the inner fire dies away, the face turns to dull ashes, like burnt lovetokens. I have felt that if a heart in which this fire kindled, could suddenly be laid bare, bright tongues of flame would leap from it as from a forge blown by the bellows; and sometimes I have seen the very depths of human eyes turn crimson with little points of fire—more crimson than a hare's eye when you catch it sideways in the sun. So that I am inclined to think the inner and outer fires may originally have been the same, and now only differ in the stuff on which they feed. But if I am wrong, please laugh at my simplicity."

"I think you yourself," I said, "are never far from laughter; but I cannot laugh to-night, being sorrowful."

"Nay," he answered, "if you will not laugh, and are sorrowful enough for understanding, I might tell you a story, almost as short as strange, about that selfsame fire.

"You remember what the poet tells us about the race of poor little mortal men and women when first they began to venture out upon the scum which gathered over the boiling star of earth. It was still warm in parts and everywhere flexible, so that what to-day was a plain might to-morrow be tossed up into a snow-capped mountain, or sunk to a lake, full of bitumen and biting salts. That condition of things was enough by itself to give great uncertainty to existence, and upon this bewildering surface men crept about, astonished and at random, never knowing what might happen next, or in what altitude and surroundings they might wake in the morning. Understanding no guidance of stars or of seasons, they lived in shocks, as when we slide in sleep from catastrophe to catastrophe. So the poet, describing their condition, says:

> 'Seeing they saw not, in those ancient days,
> And hearing heard not, but like shapes of dreams,
> Their life was one long whirl of inconsequence.'

"Of course they enjoyed no comforts of expensive simplicity such as you love. They did not even build sunny little houses, but for shelter from rain and heat they grubbed holes with their claws like phantom ants, or lay huddled together in slimy caverns where the roof dripped upon them till they steamed. In cold and damp and misery they lived, uncertain of the morrow, and they stayed their hunger by swallowing seeds and berries, or if they saw a four-footed animal sick and dying they crowded round him pelting him with stones, and then leapt upon his body with gluttonous howls, tearing his limbs asunder and gnawing them like lions; for they were not at all refined.

"But Prometheus, being only half a god, pitied their wretchedness, as he went among them to and fro from heaven. You know what strange services he did the poor creatures, for he himself described it all to those dear girls of the sea who came to cheer his lonely suffering with the sighs of their little bosoms and with commonplace as tender as their own caresses. Birds know the coming seasons, but poor man had to be taught their order by the punctual stars, which, as perhaps you may have heard, do not run about anyhow as they like, but have their risings and settings fitted with extreme nicety. Stars are, no doubt, the best guides to the future, but the Titan taught men other signs also by which to make a pretty fair guess at what was likely to happen: such as the difference between false dreams and true, the meaning of haunting sounds at night or dawn, and of the flight and habits of birds. He taught them too the more difficult art of calculating probabilities by the shape and colour of the insides of sacrificed animals, and by the general appearance of a sirloin at dinner. By such means he saved many mighty armies, giving the enemy over to destruction instead. Further, he told men what herbs to drink or chew in sickness—a matter in which dogs had some knowledge, but man none—whether hellebore was best, or mandragora, or mint, or poppy-seed, or fox-glove, or garlic which gives heroic heart; and what was good as a soothing plaster for wounds, whether pounded nipple-wort or grated cheese mingled with honey. Then he taught them

the use of the wheel, and how saving it was to harness other animals than themselves to their carts. More wonderful still, he made the white-winged wagons that flit across the sea. In crystal he showed them thin veins of rustless gold, and from lumps of uncouth rock he hammered out the sword.

"One singularly beautiful gift of a very different kind he also gave them, though the poets have not made much of it, perhaps because, having it in abundance themselves, they hardly realised its beauty. You remember how the Titan said:

> 'I stopped man looking at the truth of fate,
> And in his heart I lodged the blinding hopes.'

"That is the golden gift which casts a golden gleam about the world, making the sun appear more glorious than he is, and giving deeper blues and blacks and greens to the sea; making the sea, indeed, appear to be a beautiful or terrific being, though we know it is only so many jugfuls of salted water, and to a dog or horse it is dangerous and nasty to drink, but no more. For the dog and horse see the truth of fate; they see the bare facts of things, and when they come to a stream they drink of it, but do not worship. Man alone is blinded by the Promethean gift, and passing over reality with indifference, he fixes his vision on things which are not there. In the translucent pools of the stream he alone can see the beautiful spirit sitting with amber hair, just as the lover beholds something beautified and divine in his maiden, who very likely is only a poor unwashed and witless thing, not in the least nobler than himself. In his own heart also man is blinded to grim fate, and sees a finer spirit than exists. No one appears to himself quite so bad as he really is. When he had to die, the matricide lamented what an artist was dying, and in his own judgment Phalaris would have deserved the hemlock almost as little as the Philosopher. Wherever he moves through the world, man sees around him the fool, the knave, the scoundrel, the murderer, the swindler, the luster, the drunkard, the glutton, the coward, the traitor, the hypo-

crite, the braggart, the idiot, the gossip, the weakling, the mean and crawling soul. Yet in mankind, which is a combination of all these indifferent creatures, he sees something great and admirable; in the midst of unnatural cruelty he speaks of humanity as though it were the common possession of the human race, and of virtue as the proper quality of man. Some indeed are so richly endowed with these blinding and beneficent hopes, that they move through the world as though they had but one step to reach the Blessed Isles, of which they see the assurance in the colours of sunset clouds, or in the riding moon, or in the gleams of loveliness that flit across men's hearts like sunshine on dark mountains. By such men evil things are speedily forgotten, and a radiance of joy dances before their eyes. To them the common scenes of earth are illuminated by a glamour of sweet or heroic associations, and even through the ceilings of domestic architecture they ever behold the stars. Sad and impatient they may well be, overcome by a wild yearning for something which even their hearts can hardly imagine, yet they are surrounded by a glory which exists but for them, and is nowhere found. Or may we perhaps say that in a sense it actually exists by their means, and that their passionate conception has indeed the power to create the things they seek; just as lovers create something that is themselves and yet separate and substantial? Or if that thought appears to you too beautiful even for hope, let us remember what the Iberians say; for they dwell upon the verge of Ocean, and ever watching westward for the Blessed Isles with illimitable desire, about once every seven years they actually behold those islands far away, quivering with beauty on the horizon's rim. And thereupon they all set out in coracles, canoes, and boats of hide, with fire in their hearts and hands, for they know very well that if they can once fling fire on that enchanted land, it will abide with them for ever and be their home. Ah, son of mine," he went on, stroking the dead man's head, "on what land of desire did you seek to fling the fire of your soul? And what haven is this that you have found?"

As he seemed lost in thought, I said: "There it is again.

You speak of the fire of the soul; but I only know that Prometheus brought fire to man in a fennel-stalk, and when you said that in this poor fellow here the fire of Prometheus had gone out, you were not speaking of the same fire as the kitchen grate, I suppose, excellent and comforting as that is."

He smiled shyly and rubbed his hairy face between his hands, on which the blood lay black.

"How you drive me on," he said, "worse than the gadfly! Did we not agree that the outer and inner fires were probably of the same nature, their manifestations being so closely alike?"

"Oh, if you are going to talk in symbols," I said, "it is hopeless for an ordinary man like me."

"And yet," he answered, "you yourself are but a symbol of the fighting soul upon her perilous way. Well, I can only repeat the things I myself heard long ago, and in a different place to this.

"It was late twilight when I crept down the mountain cliffs to where the Titan lay. For in the daytime many strange beings came to see him—not only the tender mermaids, but that poor cow-headed thing, and Ocean with a shopman's reverence for success and his suspicion of people who have come down in the world. So I waited till his other visitors had gone, and then I crept along the edge to where he lay, indistinguishable from rock, save for the heaving of his breath. I stood beside him in silence, for there was nothing to say, and I saw his great limbs, how wearily they hung, being tortured and clamped with spikes and metal bands. But as midnight passed, and I watched Orion and the Pleiades and all the chilly stars going on their way without a sign of care, I touched his arm where it was pinned to the rock, and said: 'Son of Earth, I too am here.' But he made no more answer than the rock. Then I lay down beside him, warding off the frost with my nice furry skin, and all night long he hung there silent. But when first a glimmer of white stole into the eastern sky, I spoke again: 'Son of Earth, I too am here, for a flame consumes me.' And at the word he moved, as the rock of Caucasus

stirs beside the streams of ice. Then a voice came, low and proud: 'It was I brought flame to man, when before he was colder than dumb fishes.'

"Again he was silent, and as the white dawn slowly grew, I said: 'Son of Earth, a flame consumes me, seeing what injustice a god suffers at the hands of gods.'

"Then he answered: 'It was I brought flame to man, the flame for his hearth and his frozen hands. And as I bore it swiftly to earth the sparks kept streaming behind me like a comet's hair, and they mingled with the shivering spirits of unborn men. Into their very hearts the fire entered, and was made one with their blood. There it smoulders for ever, and at a breath it kindles, nor can it ever be quenched, for it is passed on from life to life. In the soul of the men I loved, the fire is kindled which shall avenge me. At the blast of its fury the gods themselves shall wither, and long ages after they have shrivelled like beaten lead in the melting-pot, the fire of my gift shall glow and quicken in the heart of man, nor shall Ocean himself avail to quench it. They into whose blood one spark of it has entered shall never rest from their defiance. Titans of mankind, pity and wrath shall not suffer them to be at peace. At the breath of injustice they shall blaze into fury, so that before them the proclamations of heaven and earth shall shrink into nothingness, and statues of stone be burnt like withered leaves. All the wealth and power of the world shall ally themselves with the thunders of the gods to tread them down, but defeated in every battle they shall never doubt of victory, for the conflict is their reward, and in the blood of their suffering they shall win their desire. Lean and disquiet they shall be, and nothing shall tempt them from their wrath. No paradise of delight shall give them comfort, nor can their indignation be appeased by all the promises of heaven. Pinned and clamped immovably to the rocks of fate, scorched by derision, frozen by the indifferent stars, torn at heart by the winged ministers of power, they shall not temper their defiance, though the world were one chrysolite, to be theirs in exchange. For these are they who dare to be sad, and have the courage to mate with

sorrow. Unobserved they shall toil in the fields or pass up and down the streets of cities, but their souls are wild as the desert where lions tread it only. Therefore let the gods send all the aviary of heaven to devour my heart, let them split my flesh with spikes of steel, or spurn me down the crags of the abyss to roll with earthquakes in the furnaces of hell—wherever that little spark shall glimmer in man's soul, there my avenger goes. O children of men, on whom I had pity, I charge you never suffer the flame of my indignation to die! In your soul from age to age it shall kindle, it shall work. When most it seems to sleep, it shall but gather rage to blaze anew, giving you no peace till the fury of its wrath is satisfied, and consuming with its flickering tongue the fortresses where injustice like the injustice of the gods had thought to dwell everlastingly at ease behind its battlements.'

"So he spoke, and the sun's edge shot above the line of the sea, for day had come and the gods were at ease in heaven. Then I departed to tend my goats, and as I went I heard upon the air the rustling of terrible feathers, and a shadow of wings swooped over the reddening ground. That day my flocks went wandering far, for I paid them little heed, so hot a fire burned in my own heart, as though kindled by the breath of the son of Earth. From that time on how often it has blazed anew, driving me into the very trough of war, one of the queerest places for a shepherd! For though I am but an old god from the country, awe-struck and speechless before the glitter and threatening attitude of all military men, yet I have taken some part, as you know, in many battles, as on that far-off day when I walked up and down the front at Marathon cleaving skulls with a ploughshare, so that the fatted ranks of wealth and slavery shivered before my rustic battle-axe."

He was silent for a time, and I could see his eyes gleaming with splendid memories. For now the filmy moon had crossed the top of heaven, and faced us from the west.

"Forgive the neighing of an old war-horse," he said, with a sudden smile. "Every one forgives that, and really it seems so long ago I can scarcely believe I am the same

god. But it is still longer since the rage of the Titans was sent sprawling over the world, and the son of Earth was nailed to his cliff; and yet I suppose something less than two hundred pairs of lovers have sufficed to hand on life from that time down to you. Or even if the right number were four hundred, that would not be very many—not nearly half as many as the men lying dead on this hill to-night—and is it not pleasant to think of all the lovers dear who have been happy in conveying to you so charming a gift as life? To this poor peasant here it was conveyed in like manner, though by a more numerous succession, for the generations of the poor are short. And with his blood they handed on that spark of Promethean fire, imparted with greater similitude than life itself. In the hearts of his creators it smouldered and glowed, till at last the flame was fanned and sped him on so that here he lies, blasted as by the thunderbolt of Zeus."

"Dear son," he said, pushing his fingers through the dead man's hair, "like me you loved the light and rain and the sheep upon the hills. You loved the ploughing ox and the ripening vines. You were happy eating and drinking, and one woman at least liked to have you near her. What was it so filled your soul with rage, that you counted all those things as nothing in the balance? Suddenly the fire grew hot, its smoke stifled your utterance, it gleamed in flame. To your fury it would have been a light task to have stormed the gates of heaven, so wild a blaze streamed along your blood. No gifts, no terms, no promises could twist you from your purpose; you could but kill or die. Nothing but death could hold you quiet, and now you are quiet indeed. Wonder fills me as I behold you, of so great a passion was this small body the shrine. Consecrated by flame, your life was as the life of gods, and by the sacrificial fire of its indignation it has been consumed. See, then, in place of the purple robes of sepulchre, I button up your tattered shirt, and draw your sodden trousers straight. For the cærulean fillets of death, I lay your weathered and sweated cap upon your brows. For the winged sandals of Hermes, conductor of souls, I tie the laces of your heavy boots around your

naked feet. And for the fee of death's river, upon your mouth I lay the kiss of reverence and awe."

The light of another day was now beginning to steal through the mist. Hungry and worn out, I lay back upon the stones, indifferent to whatever might befall, and I heard no more till there came a scraping of nailed boots upon rock and a murmur of low voices. Presently some one kicked me in the side, and cried out:

"Blest if he isn't one of us, and alive, too! And we were just going to bury him. I say, you there! What are you doing, nursing a dead enemy?"

"Oh, he's an enemy, is he?" I said, getting up; "I had quite forgotten there was such a thing."

"He's gone clean off his head," said another. "Lend a hand to heave the body down." I took the peasant's arm, and three of the burying party held his other limbs, turning him over so that he might be the easier to carry. Then with a cry all together, we raised him up and bore him down the hill to where the dead were laid out in a row. His head nodded, face downwards, between his shoulders.

"Lift up a bit, or you'll knock him against the rocks," I said to the man who held the other arm.

"That won't do him much damage," was the reply, "but up he comes!"

THE MAN WHO PLAYED UPON THE LEAF[1]

By Algernon Blackwood

WHERE the Jura pine-woods push the fringe of their purple cloak down the slopes till the vineyards stop them lest they should troop into the lake of Neuchâtel, you may find the village where lived the Man Who Played Upon the Leaf.

My first sight of him was genuinely prophetic—that spring evening in the garden *café* of the little mountain auberge. But before I saw him I heard him, and ever afterwards the sound and the sight have remained inseparable in my mind.

Jean Grospierre and Louis Favre were giving me confused instructions—the *vin rouge* of Neuchâtel is heady, you know—as to the best route up the Tête-de-Rang, when a thin, wailing music, that at first I took to be rising wind, made itself heard suddenly among the apple trees at the end of the garden, and riveted my attention with a thrill of I know not what.

Favre's description of the bridle path over Mont Racine died away; then Grospierre's eyes wandered as he, too, stopped to listen; and at the same moment a mongrel dog of indescribably forlorn appearance came whining about our table under the walnut tree.

"It's Perret 'Comment-va,' the man who plays on the leaf," said Favre.

"And his cursed dog," added Grospierre, with a shrug of

[1] From "The Lost Valley." By permission of E. P. Dutton and Company.

disgust. And, after a pause, they fell again to quarrelling about my complicated path up the Tête-de-Rang.

I turned from them in the direction of the sound.

The dusk was falling. Through the trees I saw the vineyards sloping down a mile or two to the dark blue lake with its distant-shadowed shore and the white line of misty Alps in the sky beyond. Behind us the forests rose in folded purple ridges to the heights of Boudry and La Tourne, soft and thick like carpets of cloud. There was no one about in the cabaret. I heard a horse's hoofs in the village street, a rattle of pans from the kitchen, and the soft roar of a train climbing the mountain railway through gathering darkness towards France—and, singing through it all, like a thread of silver through a dream, this sweet and windy music.

But at first there was nothing to be seen. The Man Who Played on the Leaf was not visible, though I stared hard at the place whence the sound apparently proceeded. The effect, for a moment, was almost ghostly.

Then, down there among the shadows of fruit trees and small pines, something moved, and I became aware with a start that the little *sapin* I had been looking at all the time was really not a tree, but a man—hatless, with dark face, loose hair, and wearing a *pélerine* over his shoulders. How he had produced this singularly vivid impression and taken upon himself the outline and image of a tree is utterly beyond me to describe. It was, doubtless, some swift suggestion in my own imagination that deceived me. . . . Yet he was thin, small, straight, and his flying hair and spreading *pélerine* somehow pictured themselves in the network of dusk and background into the semblance, I suppose, of branches.

I merely record my impression with the truest available words—also my instant persuasion that this first view of the man was, after all, significant and prophetic: his dominant characteristics presented themselves to me symbolically. I saw the man first as a tree; I heard his music first as wind.

Then, as he came slowly towards us, it was clear that

he produced the sound by blowing upon a leaf held to his lips between tightly closed hands. And at his heel followed the mongrel dog.

"The inseparables!" sneered Grospierre, who did not appreciate the interruption. He glanced contemptuously at the man and the dog, his face and manner, it seemed to me, conveying a merest trace, however, of superstitious fear. "The tune your father taught you, *hein?*" he added, with a cruel allusion I did not at the moment understand.

"Hush!" Favre said; "he plays thunderingly well all the same!" His glass had not been emptied quite so often, and in his eyes as he listened there was a touch of something that was between respect and wonder.

"The music of the devil," Grospierre muttered as he turned with the gesture of surly impatience to the wine and the rye bread. "It makes me dream at night. Ooua!"

The man, paying no attention to the gibes, came closer, continuing his leaf-music, and as I watched and listened the thrill that had first stirred in me grew curiously. To look at, he was perhaps forty, perhaps fifty; worn, thin, broken; and something seizingly pathetic in his appearance told its little wordless story into the air. The stamp of the outcast was mercilessly upon him. But the eyes were dark and fine. They proclaimed the possession of something that was neither worn nor broken, something that was proud to be outcast, and welcomed it.

"He's cracky, you know," explained Favre, "and half blind. He lives in that hut on the edge of the forest"—pointing with his thumb toward Côtendard—"and plays on the leaf for what he can earn."

We listened for five minutes perhaps while this singular being stood there in the dusk and piped his weird tunes; and if imagination had influenced my first sight of him it certainly had nothing to do with what I now heard. For it was unmistakable; the man played, not mere tunes and melodies, but the clean, strong, elemental sounds of Nature —especially the crying voices of wind. It was the raw material, if you like, of what the masters have used here

and there—Wagner, and so forth—but by him heard closely and wonderfully, and produced with marvellous accuracy. It was now the notes of birds or the tinkle and rustle of sounds heard in groves and copses, and now the murmur of those airs that lose their way on summer noons among the tree tops; and then, quite incredibly, just as the man came closer and the volume increased, it grew to the crying of bigger winds and the whispering rush of rain among tossed branches. . . .

How he produced it passed my comprehension, but I think he somehow mingled his own voice with the actual notes of the vibrating edge of the leaf; perhaps, too, that the strange passion shaking behind it all in the depths of the bewildered spirit poured out and reached my mind by ways unknown and incalculable.

I must have momentarily lost myself in the soft magic of it, for I remember coming back with a start to notice that the man had stopped, and that his melancholy face was turned to me with a smile of comprehension and sympathy that passed again almost before I had time to recognise it, and certainly before I had time to reply. And this time I am ready to admit that it was my own imagination, singularly stirred, that translated his smile into the words that no one else heard—

"I was playing for you—because you understand."

Favre was standing up and I saw him give the man the half loaf of coarse bread that was on the table, offering also his own partly-emptied wine-glass. "I haven't the sou today," he was saying, "but if you're hungry, mon brave——" And the man, refusing the wine, took the bread with an air of dignity that precluded all suggestion of patronage or favour, and ought to have made Favre feel proud that he had offered it.

"And that for his son!" laughed the stupid Grospierre, tossing a cheese-rind to the dog, "or for his forest god!"

The music was about me like a net that still held my words and thoughts in a delicate bondage—which is my only explanation for not silencing the coarse guide in the way he deserved; but a few minutes later, when the men

had gone into the inn, I crossed to the end of the garden, and there, where the perfumes of orchard and forest deliciously mingled, I came upon the man sitting on the grass beneath an apple-tree. The dog, wagging its tail, was at his feet, as he fed it with the best and largest portions of the bread. For himself, it seemed, he kept nothing but the crust, and—what I could hardly believe, had I not actually witnessed it—the cur, though clearly hungry, had to be coaxed with smiles and kind words to eat what he realised in some dear dog-fashion was needed even more by his master. A pair of outcasts they looked indeed, sharing dry bread in the back garden of the village inn; but in the soft discerning eyes of that mangy creature there was an expression that raised it, for me at least, far beyond the ranks of common curdom; and in the eyes of the man, half-witted and pariah as he undoubtedly was, a look that set him somewhere in a lonely place where he heard the still, small voices of the world and moved with the elemental tides of life that are never outcast and that include the farthest suns.

He took the franc I offered; and, closer, I perceived that his eyes, for all their moments of fugitive brilliance, were indeed half sightless, and that perhaps he saw only well enough to know men as trees walking. In the village some said he saw better than most, that he saw in the dark, possibly even into the peopled regions beyond this world, and there were reasons—uncanny reasons—to explain the belief. I only know, at any rate, that from this first moment of our meeting he never failed to recognise me at a considerable distance, and to be aware of my whereabouts even in the woods at night; and the best explanation I ever heard, though of course unscientific, was Louis Favre's whispered communication that "he sees with the whole surface of his skin!"

He took the franc with the same air of grandeur that he took the bread, as though he conferred a favour, yet was grateful. The beauty of that gesture has often come back to me since with a sense of wonder for the sweet nobility that I afterwards understood inspired it. At the time,

however, he merely looked up at me with the remark, *"C'est pour le Dieu*——merci!"

He did not say "le *bon* Dieu," as every one else did.

And though I had meant to get into conversation with him, I found no words quickly enough, for he at once stood up and began to play again on his leaf; and while he played his thanks and gratitude, or the thanks and gratitude of his God, that shaggy mongrel dog stopped eating and sat up beside him to listen. Both fixed their eyes upon me as the sounds of wind and birds and forest poured softly and wonderfully about my ears . . . so that, when it was over and I went down the quiet street to my *pension*, I was aware that some tiny sense of bewilderment had crept into the profounder regions of my consciousness and faintly disturbed my normal conviction that I belonged to the common world of men as of old. Some aspect of the village, especially of the human occupants in it, had secretly changed for me.

Those pearly spaces of sky, where the bats flew over the red roofs, seemed more alive, more exquisite than before; the smells of the open stables where the cows stood munching, more fragrant than usual of sweet animal life that included myself delightfully, keenly; the last chatterings of the sparrows under the eaves of my own *pension* more intimate and personal. . . .

Almost as if those strands of elemental music the man played on his leaf had for the moment made me free of the life of the earth, as distinct from the life of men. . . .

I can only suggest this, and leave the rest to the care of the imaginative reader; for it is impossible to say along what inner byways of fancy I reached the conclusion that when the man spoke of "the God," and not "the *good* God," he intended to convey his sense of some great woodland personality—some Spirit of the Forests whom he knew and loved and worshipped, and whom, he was intuitively aware, I also knew and loved and worshipped.

During the next few weeks I came to learn more about this poor, half-witted man. In the village he was known

as Perret "Comment-va," the Man Who Plays on the Leaf; but when the people wished to be more explicit they described him as the man "without parents and without God." The origin of "Comment-va" I never discovered, but the other titles were easily explained—he was illegitimate and outcast. The mother had been a wandering Italian girl and the father a loose-living *bûcheron,* who was, it seems, a standing disgrace to the community. I think the villagers were not conscious of their severity; the older generation of farmers and *vignerons* had pity, but the younger ones and those of his own age were certainly guilty, if not of deliberate cruelty, at least of a harsh neglect and the utter withholding of sympathy. It was like the thoughtless cruelty of children, due to small unwisdom, and to that absence of charity which is based on ignorance. They could not in the least understand this crazy, picturesque being who wandered day and night in the forests and spoke openly, though never quite intelligibly, of worshipping another God than their own anthropomorphic deity. People looked askance at him because he was queer; a few feared him; one or two I found later—all women—felt vaguely that there was something in him rather wonderful, they hardly knew what, that lifted him beyond the reach of village taunts and sneers. But from all he was remote, alien, solitary—an outcast and a pariah.

It so happened that I was very busy at the time, seeking the seclusion of the place for my work, and rarely going out until the day was failing; and so it was, I suppose, that my sight of the man was always associated with a gentle dusk, long shadows and slanting rays of sunlight. Every time I saw that thin, straight, yet broken figure, every time the music of the leaf reached me, there came, too, the inexplicable thrill of secret wonder and delight that had first accompanied his presence, and with it the subtle suggestion of a haunted woodland life, beautiful with new values. To this day I see that sad, dark face moving about the street, touched with melancholy, yet with the singular light of an inner glory, that sometimes lit flames in the poor eyes. Perhaps—the fancy entered my thoughts some-

times when I passed him—those who are half out of their minds, as the saying goes, are at the same time half in another region whose penetrating loveliness has so bewildered and amazed them that they no longer can play their dull part in our commonplace world; and certainly for me this man's presence never failed to convey an awareness of some hidden and secret beauty that he knew apart from the ordinary haunts and pursuits of men.

Often I followed him up into the woods—in spite of the menacing growls of the dog, who invariably showed his teeth lest I should approach too close—with a great longing to know what he did there and how he spent his time wandering in the great forests, sometimes, I was assured, staying out entire nights or remaining away for days together. For in these Jura forests that cover the mountains from Neuchâtel to Yverdon, and stretch thickly up to the very frontiers of France, you may walk for days without finding a farm or meeting more than an occasional *bûcheron*. And at length, after weeks of failure, and by some process of sympathy he apparently communicated in turn to the dog, it came about that I was—*accepted*. I was allowed to follow at a distance, to listen and, if I could, to watch.

I make use of the conditional, because once in the forest this man had the power of concealing himself in the same way that certain animals and insects conceal themselves by choosing places instinctively where the colours of their surroundings merge into their outlines and obliterate them. So long as he moved all was well; but the moment he stopped and a chance dell or cluster of trees intervened I lost sight of him, and more than once passed within a foot of his presence without knowing it, though the dog was plainly there at his feet. And the instant I turned at the sound of the leaf, there he was, leaning against some dark tree-stem, part of a shadow perhaps, growing like a forest-thing out of the thick moss that hid his feet, or merging with extraordinary intimacy into the fronds of some drooping pine bough! Moreover, this concealment was never intentional, it seems, but instinctive. The life to which he belonged took him close to its heart, draping about the starved and

wasted shoulders the cloak of kindly sympathy which the world of men denied him.

And, while I took my place some little way off upon a fallen stem, and the dog sat looking up into his face with its eyes of yearning and affection, Perret "Comment-va" would take a leaf from the nearest ivy, raise it between tightly pressed palms to his lips and begin that magic sound that seemed to rise out of the forest-voices themselves rather than to be a thing apart.

It was a late evening towards the end of May when I first secured this privilege at close quarters, and the memory of it lives in me still with the fragrance and wonder of some incredible dream. The forest just there was scented with wild lilies of the valley which carpeted the more open spaces with their white bells and big, green leaves; patches of violets and pale anemone twinkled down the mossy stairways of every glade; and through slim openings among the pine-stems I saw the shadowed blues of the lake beyond and the far line of the high Alps, soft and cloud-like in the sky. Already the woods were drawing the dusk out of the earth to cloak themselves for sleep, and in the east a rising moon stared close over the ground between the big trees, dropping trails of faint and yellowish silver along the moss. Distant cow-bells, and an occasional murmur of village voices, reached the ear. But a deep hush lay over all that mighty slope of mountain forest, and even the footsteps of ourselves and the dog had come to rest.

Then, as sounds heard in a dream, a breeze stirred the topmost branches of the pines, filtering down to us as from the wings of birds. It brought new odours of sky and sun-kissed branches with it. A moment later it lost itself in the darkening aisles of forest beyond; and out of the stillness that followed, I heard the strange music of the leaf rising about us with its extraordinary power of suggestion.

And, turning to see the face of the player more closely, I saw that it had marvellously changed, had become young, unlined, soft with joy. The spirit of the immense woods possessed him, and he was at peace. . . .

While he played, too, he swayed a little to and fro, just as a slender *sapin* sways in wind, and a revelation came to me of that strange beauty of combined sound and movement—trees bending while they sing, branches trembling and a-whisper, children that laugh while they dance. And, oh, the crying, plaintive notes of that leaf, and the profound sense of elemental primitive sound that they woke in the penetralia of the imagination, subtly linking simplicity to grandeur! Terribly yet sweetly penetrating, how they searched the heart through, and troubled the very sources of life! Often and often since have I wondered what it was in that singular music that made me *know* the distant Alps listened in their sky-spaces, and that the purple slopes of Boudry and Mont Racine bore it along the spires of their woods as though giant harp-strings stretched to the far summits of Chasseral and the arid wastes of Tête-de-Rang.

In the music this outcast played upon the leaf there was something of a wild, mad beauty that plunged like a knife to the home of tears, and at the same time sang out beyond them—something coldly elemental, close to the naked heart of life. The truth, doubtless, was that his strains, making articulate the sounds of Nature, touched deep, primitive yearnings that for many are buried beyond recall. And between the airs, even between the bars, there fell deep weeping silences when the sounds merged themselves into the sigh of wind or the murmur of falling water, just as the strange player merged his body into the form and colour of the trees about him.

And when at last he ceased, I went close to him, hardly knowing what it was I wanted so much to ask or say. He straightened up at my approach. The melancholy dropped its veil upon his face instantly.

"But that was beautiful—unearthly!" I faltered. "You never have played like that in the village——"

And for a second his eyes lit up as he pointed to the dark spaces of forest behind us:

"In there," he said softly, "there is light!"

"You hear true music in these woods," I ventured, hop-

ing to draw him out; "this music you play—this exquisite singing of winds and trees——?"

He looked at me with a puzzled expression and I knew, of course, that I had blundered with my banal words. Then, before I could explain or alter, there floated to us through the trees a sound of church bells from villages far away; and instantly, as he heard, his face grew dark, as though he understood in some vague fashion that it was a symbol of the faith of those parents who had wronged him, and of the people who continually made him suffer. Something of this, I feel sure, passed through his tortured mind, for he looked menacingly about him, and the dog, who caught the shadow of all his moods, began to growl angrily.

"My music," he said, with a sudden abruptness that was almost fierce, "is for my God."

"Your God of the Forests?" I said, with a real sympathy that I believe reached him.

"Pour sûr! Pour sûr! I play it all over the world"—he looked about him down the slopes of villages and vineyards —"and for those who understand—those who belong—to come."

He was, I felt sure, going to say more, perhaps to unbosom himself to me a little; and I might have learned something of the ritual this self-appointed priest of Pan followed in his forest temples—when, the sound of the bells swelled suddenly on the wind, and he turned with an angry gesture and made to go. Their insolence, penetrating even to the privacy of his secret woods, was too much for him.

"And you find many?" I asked.

Perret *"Comment-va"* shrugged his shoulders and smiled pityingly.

"Moi. Puis le chien—puis maintenant—vous!"

He was gone the same minute, as if the branches stretched out dark arms to draw him away among them, . . . and on my way back to the village, by the growing light of the moon, I heard far away in that deep world of a million trees the echoes of a weird, sweet music, as this unwitting votary of Pan piped and fluted to his mighty God upon an ivy leaf.

And the last thing I actually saw was the mongrel cur turning back from the edge of the forest to look at me for a moment of hesitation. He thought it was time now that I should join the little band of worshippers and follow them to the haunted spots of worship.

"Moi—puis le chien—puis maintenant—vous!"

From that moment of speech a kind of unexpressed intimacy between us came into being, and whenever we passed one another in the street he would give me a swift, happy look, and jerk his head significantly towards the forests. The feeling that, perhaps, in his curious lonely existence I counted for something important made me very careful with him. From time to time I gave him a few francs, and regularly twice a week when I knew he was away, I used to steal unobserved to his hut on the edge of the forest and put parcels of food inside the door—*salamé*, cheese, bread; and on one or two occasions when I had been extravagant with my own tea, pieces of plum-cake—what the Colombier baker called *plume-cak'!*

He never acknowledged these little gifts, and I sometimes wondered to what use he put them, for though the dog remained well favoured, so far as any cur can be so, he himself seemed to waste away more rapidly than ever. I found, too, that he did receive help from the village—official help—but that after the night when he was caught on the church steps with an oil can, kindling-wood and a box of matches, this help was reduced by half, and the threat made to discontinue it altogether. Yet I feel sure there was no inherent maliciousness in the Man Who Played upon the Leaf, and that his hatred of an "alien" faith was akin to the mistaken zeal that in other days could send poor sinners to the stake for the ultimate safety of their souls.

Two things, moreover, helped to foster the tender belief I had in his innate goodness: first, that all the children of the village loved him and were unafraid, to the point of playing with him and pulling him about as though he were a big dog; and, secondly, that his devotion for the mongrel

hound, his equal and fellow-worshipper, went to the length of genuine self-sacrifice. I could never forget how he fed it with the best of the bread, when his own face was pinched and drawn with hunger; and on other occasions I saw many similar proofs of his unselfish affection. His love for that mongrel, never uttered, in my presence at least, perhaps unrecognised as love even by himself, must surely have risen in some form of music or incense to sweeten the very halls of heaven.

In the woods I came across him anywhere and everywhere, sometimes so unexpectedly that it occurred to me he must have followed me stealthily for long distances. And once, in that very lonely stretch above the mountain railway, toward Montmollin, where the trees are spaced apart with an effect of cathedral aisles and Gothic arches, he caught me suddenly and did something that for a moment caused me a thrill of genuine alarm.

Wild lilies of the valley grow very thickly thereabouts, and the ground falls into a natural hollow that shuts it off from the rest of the forest with a peculiar and delightful sense of privacy; and when I came across it for the first time I stopped with a sudden feeling of quite bewildering enchantment—with a kind of childish awe that caught my breath as though I had slipped through some fairy door or blundered out of the ordinary world into a place of holy ground where solemn and beautiful things were the order of the day.

I waited a moment and looked about me. It was utterly still. The haze of the day had given place to an evening clarity of atmosphere that gave the world an appearance of having just received its finishing touches of pristine beauty. The scent of the lilies was overpoweringly sweet. But the whole first impression—before I had time to argue it away—was that I stood before some mighty chancel steps on the eve of a secret festival of importance, and that all was prepared and decorated with a view to the coming ceremony. The hush was the most delicate and profound imaginable—almost forbidding. I was a rude disturber.

Then, without any sound of approaching footsteps, my

hat was lifted from my head, and when I turned with a sudden start of alarm, there before me stood Perret *"Comment-va,"* the Man Who Played upon the Leaf.

An extraordinary air of dignity hung about him. His face was stern, yet rapt; something in his eyes genuinely impressive; and his whole appearance produced the instant impression—it touched me with a fleeting sense of awe—that here I had come upon him in the very act—had surprised this poor, broken being in some dramatic moment when his soul sought to find its own peculiar region, and to transform itself into loveliness through some process of outward worship.

He handed the hat back to me without a word, and I understood that I had unwittingly blundered into the secret place of his strange cult, some shrine, as it were, haunted doubly by his faith and imagination, perhaps even into his very Holy of Holies. His own head, as usual, was bared. I could no more have covered myself again than I could have put my hat on in Communion service of my own church.

"But—this wonderful place—this peace, this silence!" I murmured, with the best manner of apology for the intrusion I could muster on the instant. "May I stay a little with you, perhaps—and see?"

And his face passed almost immediately, when he realised that I understood, into that soft and happy expression the woods invariably drew out upon it—the look of the soul, complete and healed.

"Hush!" he whispered, his face solemn with the mystery of the listening trees; *"Vous êtes un peu en retard—mais pourtant. . . ."*

And lifting the leaf to his lips he played a soft and whirring music that had for its undercurrent the sounds of running water and singing wind mingled exquisitely together. It was half chant, half song, solemn enough for the dead, yet with a strain of soaring joy in it that made me think of children and a perfect faith. The music *blessed* me, and the leagues of forest, listening, poured about us all their healing forces.

I swear it would not have greatly surprised me to see the shaggy flanks of Pan himself disappearing behind the moss-grown boulders that lay about the hollows, or to have caught the flutter of white limbs as the nymphs stepped to the measure of his tune through the mosaic of slanting sunshine and shadow beyond.

Instead, I saw only that picturesque madman playing upon his ivy leaf, and at his feet the faithful dog staring up without blinking into his face, from time to time turning to make sure that I listened and understood.

But the desolate places drew him most, and no distance seemed too great either for himself or his dog.

In this part of the Jura there is scenery of a sombre and impressive grandeur that, in its way, is quite as majestic as the revelation of far bigger mountains. The general appearance of soft blue pine woods is deceptive. The Boudry cliffs, slashed here and there with inaccessible couloirs, are undeniably grand, and in the sweep of the Creux du Van precipices there is a splendid terror quite as solemn as that of the Matterhorn itself. The shadows of its smooth, circular walls deny the sun all day, and the winds, caught within the 700ft. sides of its huge amphitheatre, as in the hollow of some awful cup, boom and roar with the crying of lost thunders.

I often met him in these lonely fastnesses, wearing that half-bewildered, half-happy look of the wandering child; and one day in particular, when I risked my neck scrambling up the most easterly of the Boudry couloirs, I learned afterwards that he had spent the whole time—four hours and more—on the little Champ de Trémont at the bottom, watching me with his dog till I arrived in safety at the top. His fellow-worshippers were few, he explained, and worth keeping; though it was ever inexplicable to me how his poor damaged eyes performed the marvels of sight they did.

And another time, at night, when, I admit, no sane man should have been abroad, and I had lost my way coming home from a climb along the torn and precipitous ledges

of La Tourne, I heard his leaf thinly piercing the storm, always in front of me yet never overtaken, a sure though invisible guide. The cliffs on that descent are sudden and treacherous. The torrent of the Areuse, swollen with the melting snows, thundered ominously far below; and the forests swung their vast wet cloaks about them with torrents of blinding rain and clouds of darkness—yet all fragrant with warm wind as a virgin world answering to its first spring tempest. There he was, the outcast with his leaf, playing to his God amid all these crashings and bellowings. . . .

In the night, too, when skies were quiet and stars a-gleam, or in the still watches before the dawn, I would sometimes wake with the sound of clustered branches combing faint music from the gently-rising wind, and figure to myself that strange, lost creature wandering with his dog and leaf, his *pélerine*, his flying hair, his sweet, rapt expression of an inner glory, out there among the world of swaying trees he loved so well. And then my first soft view of the man would come back to me when I had seen him in the dusk as a tree; as though by some queer optical freak my outer and my inner vision had mingled so that I perceived both his broken body and his soul of magic.

For the mysterious singing of the leaf, heard in such moments from my window while the world slept, expressed absolutely the inmost cry of that lonely and singular spirit, damaged in the eyes of the village beyond repair, but in the sight of the wood-gods he so devoutly worshipped, made whole with their own peculiar loveliness and fashioned after the image of elemental things.

The spring wonder was melting into the peace of the long summer days when the end came. The vineyards had begun to dress themselves in green, and the forest in those soft blues when individual trees lose their outline in the general body of the mountain. The lake was indistinguishable from the sky; the Jura peaks and ridges gone a-soaring into misty distances; the white Alps withdrawn into inaccessible and remote solitudes of heaven. I was making re-

luctant preparations for leaving—dark London already in my thoughts—when the news came. I forget who first put it into actual words. It had been about the village all the morning, and something of it was in every face as I went down the street. But the moment I came out and saw the dog on my doorstep, looking up at me with puzzled and beseeching eyes, I knew that something untoward had happened; and when he bit at my boots and caught my trousers in his teeth, pulling me in the direction of the forest, a sudden sense of poignant bereavement shot through my heart that I found it hard to explain, and that must seem incredible to those who have never known how potent may be the conviction of a sudden intuition.

I followed the forlorn creature whither it led, but before a hundred yards lay behind us I had learned the facts from half-a-dozen mouths. That morning, very early, before the countryside was awake, the first mountain train, swiftly descending the steep incline below Chambrelien, had caught Perret "Comment-va" just where the Mont Racine *sentier* crosses the line on the way to his best-beloved woods, and in one swift second had swept him into eternity. The spot was in the direct line he always took to that special woodland shrine—his Holy Place.

And the manner of his death was characteristic of what I had divined in the man from the beginning; for he had given up his life to save his dog—this mongrel and faithful creature that now tugged so piteously at my trousers. Details, too, were not lacking; the engine-driver had not failed to tell the story at the next station, and the news had travelled up the mountain-side in the way that all such news travels—swiftly. Moreover, the woman who lived at the hut beside the crossing, and lowered the wooden barriers at the approach of all trains, had witnessed the whole sad scene from the beginning.

And it is soon told. Neither she nor the engine-driver knew exactly how the dog got caught in the rails, but both saw that it *was* caught, and both saw plainly how the figure of the half-witted wanderer, hatless as usual and with cape flying, moved deliberately across the line to release it.

It all happened in a moment. The man could only have saved himself by leaving the dog to its fate. The shrieking whistle had as little effect upon him as the powerful brakes had upon the engine in those few available moments. Yet, in the fraction of a second before the engine caught them, the dog somehow leapt free, and the soul of the Man Who Played upon the Leaf passed into the presence of his God —singing.

As soon as it realised that I followed willingly, the beastie left me and trotted on ahead, turning every few minutes to make sure that I was coming. But I guessed our destination without difficulty. We passed the Pontarlier railway first, then climbed for half-an-hour and crossed the mountain line about a mile above the scene of the disaster, and so eventually entered the region of the forest, still quivering with innumerable flowers, where in the shaded heart of trees we approached the spot of lilies that I knew—the place where a few weeks before the devout worshipper had lifted the hat from my head because the earth whereon I stood was holy ground. We stood in the pillared gateway of his Holy of Holies. The cool airs, perfumed beyond belief, stole out of the forest to meet us on the very threshold, for the trees here grew so thickly that only patches of the summer blaze found an entrance. And this time I did not wait on the outskirts, but followed my four-footed guide to a group of mossy boulders that stood in the very centre of the hollow.

And there, as the dog raised its eyes to mine, soft with the pain of its great unanswerable question, I saw in a cleft of the grey rock the ashes of many hundred fires; and, placed about them in careful array, an assortment of the sacrifices he had offered, doubtless in sharp personal deprivation, to his deity:—bits of mouldy bread, half-loaves, untouched portions of cheese, *salamé* with the skin uncut—most of it exactly as I had left it in his hut; and last of all, wrapped in the original white paper, the piece of Colombier *plume-cak'*, and a row of ten silver francs round the edge. . . .

I learned afterwards, too, that among the almost un-

recognisable remains on the railway, untouched by the devouring terror of the iron, they had found a hand—tightly clasping in its dead fingers a crumpled ivy leaf. . . .

My efforts to find a home for the dog delayed my departture, I remember, several days; but in the autumn when I returned it was only to hear that the creature had refused to stay with any one, and finally had escaped into the forest and deliberately starved itself to death. They found its skeleton, Louis Favre told me, in a rocky hollow on the lower slopes of Mont Racine in the direction of Montmollin. But Louis Favre did not know, as I knew, that this hollow had received other sacrifices as well, and was consecrated ground.

And somewhere, if you search well the Jura slopes between Champ du Moulin, where Jean-Jacques Rousseau had his temporary house, and Côtendard, where he visited Lord Wemyss when "Milord Maréchal Keith" was Governor of the Principality of Neuchâtel under Frederic II, King of Prussia—if you look well these haunted slopes, somewhere between the vineyards and the gleaming limestone heights, you shall find the forest glade where lie the bleached bones of the mongrel dog, and the little village cemetery that holds the remains of the Man Who Played upon the Leaf to the honour of the Great God Pan.

AN OLD THORN

By W. H. Hudson

THE little village of Ingden lies in a hollow of the South Wiltshire Downs, the most isolated of the villages in that lonely district. Its one short street is crossed at right angles in the middle part by the Salisbury road, and standing just at that point, the church on one hand, the old inn on the other, you can follow it with the eye for a distance of nearly three miles. First it goes winding up the low down under which the village stands, then vanishes over the brow to reappear again a mile and a half further away as a white band on the vast green slope of the succeeding down, which rises to a height of over 600 feet. On the summit it vanishes once more, but those who use it know it for a laborious road crossing several high ridges before dropping down into the valley road leading to Salisbury.

When, standing in the village street, your eye travels up that white band, you can distinctly make out even at that distance a small solitary tree standing near the summit—an old thorn with an ivy growing on it. My walks were often that way, and invariably on coming to that point I would turn twenty yards aside from the road to spend half an hour seated on the turf near or under the old tree. These half-hours were always grateful; and conscious that the tree drew me to it I questioned myself as to the reason. It was, I told myself, nothing but mental curiosity—my interest was a purely scientific one. For how comes it, I asked, that a thorn can grow to a tree and live to a great age in such a situation, on a vast naked down, where for many centuries, perhaps for thousands of years, the herbage has been so closely fed by sheep as to have the appearance of a carpet or newly mown lawn? The seed is carried and scat-

tered everywhere by the birds, but no sooner does it germinate and send up a shoot than it is eaten down to the roots; for there is no scent that attracts a sheep more, no flavour it has greater taste for, than that of any forest seedling springing up amidst the minute herbaceous plants which carpet the downs. The thorn, like other organisms, has its own unconscious intelligence and cunning by means of which it endeavours to save itself and fulfil its life. It opens its first tender leaves under the herbage and at the same time thrusts up a vertical spine to wound the nibbling mouth; and no sooner has it got a leaf or two and a spine than it spreads its roots all round and from each of them springs a fresh shoot, leaves and protecting spine, to increase the chance of preservation. In vain! the cunning animal finds a way to defeat all this strategy, and after the leaves have been bitten off again and again, the infant plant gives up the struggle and dies in the ground. Yet we see that from time to time one survives—one perhaps in a million; but how—whether by a quicker growth or a harder or more poisonous thorn, an unpalatable leaf, or some secret agency—we cannot guess. First, as a diminutive, scrubby shrub, with numerous iron-hard stems, with few and small leaves but many thorns, it keeps its poor flowerless frustrate life for perhaps half a century or longer, without growing more than a couple of feet high; and then, as by a miracle, it will spring up until its top shoots out of reach of the browsing sheep, and in the end it becomes a tree with spreading branches and fully developed leaves, and flowers and fruit in its season.

One day I was visited by an artist from a distance who, when shown the thorn, pronounced it a fine subject for his pencil, and while he made his picture we talked about the hawthorn generally as compared with other trees, and agreed that, except in its blossoming time when it is merely pretty, it is the most engaging and perhaps the most beautiful of our native trees. We said that it was the most *individual* of trees, that its variety was infinite, for you never find two alike whether growing in a forest, in groups or masses, or alone. We were almost lyrical in its praises.

But the solitary thorn was always best, he said, and this one was perhaps the best of all he had seen; strange and at the same time decorative in its form, beautiful too in its appearance of great age with unimpaired vigour and something more in its expression—that elusive something which we find in some trees and don't know how to explain.

Ah, yes, thought I, it was this appeal to the æsthetic faculty which attracted me from the first, and not, as I had imagined, the mere curiosity of the naturalist interested mainly and always in the *habits* of living things, plant or animal.

Certainly the thorn had strangeness. Its appearance as to height was deceptive; one would have guessed it eighteen feet; measuring it I was surprised to find it only ten. It has four separate boles, springing from one root, leaning a little away from each other, the thickest just a foot in circumference. The branches are few, beginning at about five feet from the ground, the foliage thin, the leaves throughout the summer stained with grey, rust-red, and purple colour. Though so small and exposed to the full fury of every wind that blows over that vast naked down, it has yet an ivy growing on it—the strangest of the many strange ivy-plants I have seen. It comes out of the ground as two ivy trunks on opposite sides of the stoutest bole, but at a height of four feet from the surface the two join and ascend the tree as one round iron-coloured and iron-hard stem, which goes curving and winding snakewise among the branches as if with the object of roping them to save them from being torn off by the winds. Finally, rising to the top, the long serpent-stem opens out in a flat disc-shaped mass of close-packed branchlets and twigs densely set with small round leaves, dark dull green and tough as parchment. One could only suppose that thorn and ivy had been partners from the beginning of life, and that the union was equally advantageous to both.

The small ivy disc or platform on top of the tree was a favourite stand and look-out for the downland birds. I seldom visited the spot without disturbing some of them, now a little company of missel-thrushes, now a crowd of

starlings, then perhaps a dozen rooks, crowded together, looking very big and conspicuous on their little platform.

Being curious to find out something about the age of the tree I determined to put the question to my old friend Malachi, aged eighty-nine, who was born and had always lived in the parish and had known the downs and probably every tree growing on them for miles around from his earliest years. It was my custom to drop in of an evening and sit with him, listening to his endless reminiscences of his young days. That evening I spoke of the thorn, describing its position and appearance, thinking that perhaps he had forgotten it. How long, I asked him, had the thorn been there?

He was one of those men, usually of the labouring class, to be met with in such lonely, out-of-the-world places as the Wiltshire Downs, whose eyes never look old however many their years may be, and are more like the eyes of a bird or animal than a human being, for they gaze at you and through you when you speak without appearing to know what you say. So it was on this occasion; he looked straight at me with no sign of understanding, no change in his clear grey eyes, and answered nothing. But I would not be put off, and when, raising my voice, I repeated the question, he replied after another interval of silence that the thorn "was never any different." 'Twas just the same, ivy and all, when he were a small boy. It just looked old: why, he remembered his old father saying the same thing—'twas the same when he were a boy, and 'twas the same in his father's time. Then anxious to escape from the subject he began talking of something else.

It struck me that after all the most interesting thing about the thorn was it appearance of great age, and this aspect I had now been told had continued for at least a century, probably for a much longer time. It produced a reverent feeling in me such as we experience at the sight of some ancient stone monument. But the tree was alive, and because of its life the feeling was perhaps stronger than in the case of a granite cross or cromlech or other memorial of antiquity.

Sitting by the thorn one day it occurred to me that, growing at this spot close to the road and near the summit of that vast down, numberless persons travelling to and from Salisbury must have turned aside to rest on the turf in the shade after that laborious ascent or before beginning the long descent to the valley below. Travellers of all conditions, on foot or horseback, in carts and carriages, merchants, bagmen, farmers, drovers, gipsies, tramps and vagrants of all descriptions, and from time to time troops of soldiers. Yet never one of them had injured the tree in any way! I could not remember ever finding a tree growing alone by the roadside in a lonely place which had not the marks of many old and new wounds inflicted on its trunk with knives, hatchets, and other implements. Here not a mark, not a scratch had been made on any one of its four trunks or on the ivy stem by any thoughtless or mischievous person, nor had any branch been cut or broken off. Why had they one and all respected this tree?

It was another subject to talk to Malachi about, and to him I went after tea and found him with three of his neighbours sitting by the fire and talking; for though it was summer the old man always had a fire in the evening.

They welcomed and made room for me, but I had no sooner broached the subject in my mind than they all fell into silence, then after a brief interval the three callers began to discuss some little village matter. I was not going to be put off in that way, and leaving them out, went on talking to Malachi about the tree. Presently one by one the visitors got up and, remarking that it was time to be going, they took their departure.

The old man could not escape nor avoid listening, and in the end had to say something. He said he didn't know nothing about all them tramps and gipsies and other sorts of men who had sat by the tree; all he knowed was that the old thorn had been a good thorn to him—first and last. He remembered once when he was a young man, not yet twenty, he went to do some work at a village five miles away, and being winter time he left early, about four o'clock, to walk home over the downs. He had just got married

and had promised his wife to be home for tea at six o'clock. But a thick fog came up over the downs and soon as it got dark he lost himself. 'Twas the darkest, thickest night he had ever been out in; and whenever he came against a bank or other obstruction he would get down on his hands and knees and feel it up and down to get its shape and find out what it was, for he knew all the marks on his native downs; 'twas all in vain—nothing could he recognise. In this way he wandered about for hours and was in despair of getting home that night when all at once there came a sense of relief, a feeling that it was all right, that something was guiding him.

I remarked that I knew what that meant: he had lost his sense of direction and had now all at once recovered it; such a thing had often happened; I once had such an experience myself.

No, it was not that, he returned. He had not gone a dozen steps from the moment that sense of confidence came to him, before he ran into a tree, and feeling the trunk with his hands he recognised it as the old thorn and knew where he was. In a couple of minutes he was on the road, and in less than an hour, just about midnight, he was safe at home.

No more could I get out of him, at all events on that occasion; nor did I ever succeed in extracting any further personal experience in spite of his having let out that the thorn had been a good thorn to him, first and last. I had, however, heard enough to satisfy me that I had at length discovered the real secret of the tree's fascination. I recalled other trees which had similarly affected me, and how, long years ago, when a good deal of my time was spent on horseback, whenever I found myself in a certain district I would go miles out of my way just to look at a solitary old tree growing in a lonely place, and to sit for an hour to refresh myself, body and soul, in its shade. I had, indeed, all along suspected the thorn of being one of this order of mysterious trees; and from other experiences I had met with, one some years ago in a village in this same county of Wilts, I had formed the opinion that in many

persons the sense of a strange intelligence and possibly of power in such trees is not a mere transitory mental state but an enduring influence which profoundly affects their whole lives.

Determined to find out something more, I went to other villagers, mostly women, who are more easily disarmed and made to believe that you too know and are of the same mind with them, being under the same mysterious power and spell. In this way, laying many a subtle snare, I succeeded in eliciting a good deal of information. It was, however, mostly of a kind which could not profitably be used in any inquiry into the subject; it simply went to show that the feeling existed and was strong in many of the villagers. During this inquiry I picked up several anecdotes about a person who lived in Ingden close upon three generations ago, and was able to piece them together so as to make a consistent narrative of his life. This was Johnnie Budd, a farm labourer, who came to his end in 1821, a year or so before my old friend Malachi was born. It is going very far back, but there were circumstances in his life which made a deep impression on the mind of that little community and the story had lived on through all these years.

Johnnie had fallen on hard times when in an exceptionally severe winter season he with others had been thrown out of employment at the farm where he worked; then with a wife and three small children to keep he had in his desperation procured food for them one dark night in an adjacent field. But alas! one of the little ones, playing in the road with some of her companions, who were all very hungry, let it out that she wasn't hungry, that for three days she had had as much nice meat as she wanted to eat! Play over, the hungry little ones flew home to tell their parents the wonderful news—why didn't they have nice meat like Tilly Budd, instead of a piece of rye bread without even dripping on it, when they were so hungry? Much talk followed, and spread from cottage to cottage until it reached the constable's ears, and he, already informed of the loss of a wether taken from its fold close

by, went straight to Johnnie and charged him with the offence. Johnnie lost his head, and dropping on his knees confessed his guilt and begged his old friend Lampard to have mercy on him and to overlook it for the sake of his wife and children.

It was his first offence, but when he was taken from the lock-up at the top of the village street to be conveyed to Salisbury, his friends and neighbours who had gathered at the spot to witness his removal shook their heads and doubted that Ingden would ever see him again. The confession had made the case so simple a one that he had at once been committed to take his trial at Salisbury Assizes, and as the time was near the constable had been ordered to convey the prisoner to the town himself. Accordingly he engaged old Joe Blaskett, called Daddy in the village, to take them in his pony cart. Daddy did not want the job, but was talked or bullied into it, and there he now sat in his cart, waiting in glum silence for his passengers; a bent old man of eighty, with a lean, grey, bitter face, in his rusty cloak, his old rabbit-skin cap drawn down over his ears, his white disorderly beard scattered over his chest. The constable Lampard was a big, powerful man, with a great round, good-natured face, but just now he had a strong sense of his responsibility, and to make sure of not losing his prisoner he handcuffed him before bringing him out and helping him to take his seat on the bottom of the cart. Then he got up himself to his seat by the driver's side; the last good-bye was spoken, the weeping wife being gently led away by her friends, and the cart rattled away down the street. Turning into the Salisbury road it was soon out of sight over the near down, but half an hour later it emerged once more into sight beyond the great dip, and the villagers who had remained standing about at the same spot watched it crawling like a beetle up the long white road on the slope of the vast down beyond.

Johnnie was now lying coiled up on his rug, his face hidden between his arms, abandoned to his grief, sobbing aloud. Lampard, sitting athwart the seat so as to keep an

eye on him, burst out at last: "Be a man, Johnnie, and stop your crying! 'Tis making things no better by taking on like that. What do you say, Daddy?"

"I say nought," snapped the old man, and for a while they proceeded in silence except for those heartrending sobs. As they approached the old thorn tree, near the top of the long slope, Johnnie grew more and more agitated, his whole frame shaking with his sobbing. Again the constable rebuked him, telling him that 'twas a shame for a man to go on like that. Then with an effort he restrained his sobs, and lifting a red, swollen, tear-stained face he stammered out: "Master Lampard, did I ever ask 'ee a favour in my life?"

"What be after now?" said the other suspiciously. "Well, no, Johnnie, not as I remember."

"An' do 'ee think I'll ever come back home again, Master Lampard?"

"Maybe no, maybe yes; 'tis not for me to say."

"But 'ee knows 'tis a hanging matter?"

"'Tis that for sure. But you be a young man with a wife and childer, and have never done no wrong before—not that I ever heard say. Maybe the judge'll recommend you to mercy. What do you say, Daddy?"

The old man only made some inarticulate sounds in his beard, without turning his head.

"But, Master Lampard, suppose I don't swing, they'll send I over the water and I'll never see the wife and children no more."

"Maybe so; I'm thinking that's how 'twill be."

"Then will 'ee do me a kindness? 'Tis the only one I ever asked 'ee, and there'll be no chance to ask 'ee another."

"I can't say, Johnnie, not till I know what 'tis you want."

"'Tis only this, Master Lampard. When we git to th' old thorn let me out o' the cart and let me stand under it one minnit and no more."

"Be you wanting to hang yourself before the trial, then?" said the constable, trying to make a joke of it.

"I couldn't do that," said Johnnie, simply, "seeing my hands be fast and you'd be standing by."

"No, no, Johnnie, 'tis nought but just foolishness. What do you say, Daddy?"

The old man turned round with a look of sudden rage in his grey face which startled Lampard: but he said nothing, he only opened and shut his mouth two or three times without a sound.

Meanwhile the pony had been going slower and slower for the last thirty or forty yards, and now when they were abreast of the tree, stood still.

"What be stopping for?" cried Lampard. "Get on—get on, or we'll never get to Salisbury this day."

Then at length old Blaskett found a voice.

"Does thee know what thee's saying, Master Lampard, or be thee a stranger in this parish?"

"What d'ye mean, Daddy? I be no stranger; I've a-known this parish and known 'ee these nine years."

"Thee asked why I stopped when 'twas the pony stopped, knowing where we'd got to. But thee's not born here or thee'd a-known what a hoss knows. An' since 'ee asks what I says, I say this, 'twill not hurt 'ee to let Johnnie Budd stand one minute by the tree."

Feeling insulted and puzzled the constable was about to assert his authority when he was arrested by Johnnie's cry, "Oh, Master Lampard, 'tis my last hope!" and by the sight of the agony of suspense on his swollen face. After a short hesitation he swung himself out over the side of the cart, and letting down the tailboard laid rough hands on Johnnie and half helped, half dragged him out.

They were quickly by the tree, where Johnnie stood silent with downcast eyes a few moments; then dropping upon his knees leant his face against the bark, his eyes closed, his lips murmuring.

"Time's up!" cried Lampard presently, and taking him by the collar pulled him to his feet; in a couple of minutes more they were in the cart and on their way.

It was grey weather, very cold, with an east wind blowing, but for the rest of that dreary seventeen-miles journey

Johnnie was very quiet and submissive and shed no more tears.

What had been his motive in wishing to stand by the tree? What did he expect when he said that it was his last hope? During the way up the long laborious slope an incident of his early years in connection with the tree had been in his mind, and had wrought on him until it culminated in that passionate outburst and his strange request. It was when he was a boy not quite ten years old, that one afternoon in the summer-time he went with other children to look for wild raspberries on the summit of the great down. Johnnie being the eldest was the leader of the little band. On the way back from the brambly place where the fruit grew, on approaching the thorn they spied a number of rooks sitting on it, and it came into Johnnie's mind that it would be great fun to play at crows by sitting on the branches as near the top as they could get. Running on, with cries that sent the rooks cawing away, they began swarming up the trunks, but in the midst of their frolic, when they were all struggling for the best places on the branches, they were startled by a shout, and looking up to the top of the down saw a man on horseback coming towards them at a gallop, shaking a whip in anger as he rode. Instantly they began scrambling down, falling over each other in their haste, then, picking themselves up, set off down the slope as fast as they could run. Johnnie was foremost, while close behind him came Marty, who was nearly the same age and though a girl almost as swift-footed, but before going fifty yards she struck her foot against an ant-hill and was thrown violently, face down, on the turf. Johnnie turned at her cry and flew back to help her up, but the shock of the fall and her extreme terror had deprived her for the moment of all strength, and while he struggled to raise her the smaller children one by one overtook and passed them, and in another moment the man was off his horse, standing over them. "Do you want a good thrashing?" he said, grasping Johnnie by the collar.

"Oh, sir, please don't hit me!" answered Johnnie; then

looking up he was astonished to see that his captor was not the stern old farmer, the tenant of the down, he had taken him for, but a stranger and a strange-looking man, in a dark grey cloak with a red collar; he had a pointed beard and long black hair and dark eyes that were not evil yet frightened Johnnie when he caught them gazing down on him.

"No, I'll not thrash you," said he, "because you stayed to help the little maiden, but I'll tell you something for your good about the tree you and your little mates have been climbing, bruising the bark with your heels and breaking off leaves and twigs. Do you know, boy, that if you hurt it, it will hurt you? It stands here with its roots in the ground and you—you can go away from it, you think. 'Tis not so; something will come out of it and follow you wherever you go and hurt and break you at last. But if you make it a friend and care for it it will care for you and give you happiness and deliver you from evil."

Then touching Johnnie's cheeks with his gloved hand he got on his horse and rode away, and no sooner was he gone than Marty started up, and hand in hand the two children set off at a run down the long slope.

Johnnie's playtime was nearly over then, for by-an-by he was taken as farmer's boy at one of the village farms. When he was nineteen years old, one Sunday evening when standing in the road with other young people of the village, youths and girls, it was powerfully borne on his mind that his old playmate Marty was not only the prettiest and best girl in the place, but that she had something which set her apart and far, far above all other women. For now, after having known her intimately from his first years, he had suddenly fallen in love with her, a feeling which caused him to shiver in a kind of ecstasy, yet made him miserable since it had purged his sight and made him see, too, how far apart they were and how hopeless his case. It was true that they had been comrades from childhood, fond of each other, but she had grown and developed until she had become that most bright and lovely being, while he had remained the same slow-witted, awk-

ward, almost inarticulate Johnnie he had always been. This feeling preyed on his poor mind, and when he joined the evening gathering in the village street he noted bitterly how contemptuously he was left out of the conversation by the others, how incapable he was of keeping pace with them in their laughing talk and banter. And, worst of all, how Marty was the leading spirit, bandying words and bestowing smiles and pleasantries all round but never a word or a smile for him. He could not endure it, and so instead of smartening himself up after work and going for company to the village street, he would walk down the secluded lane near the farm to spend the hour before supper and bedtime sitting on a gate, brooding on his misery; and if by chance he met Marty in the village he would try to avoid her and was silent and uncomfortable in her presence.

After work, one hot summer evening, Johnnie was walking along the road near the farm in his working-clothes, clay-coloured boots, and old dusty hat, when who should he see but Marty coming toward him, looking very sweet and fresh in her light-coloured print gown. He looked to this side and that for some friendly gap or opening in the hedge so as to take himself out of the road, but there was no way of escape at that spot and he had to pass her, and so casting down his eyes he walked on, wishing he could sink into the earth out of her sight. But she would not allow him to pass; she put herself directly in his way and spoke.

"What's the matter with 'ee, Johnnie, that 'ee don't want to meet me and hardly say a word when I speak to 'ee?"

He could not find a word in reply: he stood still, his face crimson, his eyes on the ground.

"Johnnie, dear, what is it?" she asked, coming closer and putting her hand on his arm.

Then he looked up, and seeing the sweet compassion in her eyes he could no longer keep the secret of his pain from her.

"'Tis 'ee, Marty," he said. "Thee'll never want I—there's others 'ee'll like better. 'Tisn't for I to say a word

about that, I'm thinking, for I be—just nothing. An'—an' —I be going away from the village, Marty, and I'll never come back no more."

"Oh, Johnnie, don't 'ee say it! Would 'ee go and break my heart? Don't 'ee know I've always loved 'ee since we were little mites together?"

And thus it came about that Johnnie, most miserable of men, was all at once made happy beyond his wildest dreams. And he proved himself worthy of her: from that time there was not a more diligent and sober young labourer in the village, nor one of a more cheerful disposition, nor more careful of his personal appearance when, the day's work done, the young people had their hour of social intercourse and courting. Yet he was able to put by a portion of his weekly wages of six shillings to buy sticks so that when spring came round again he was able to marry and take Marty to live with him in his own cottage.

One Sunday afternoon, shortly after this happy event, they went out for a walk on the high down.

"Oh, Johnnie, 'tis a long time since we were here together, not since we used to come and play and look for cowslips when we were little."

Johnnie laughed with pure joy and said they would just be children and play again, now they were alone and out of sight of the village; and when she smiled up at him he rejoiced to think that his union with this perfect girl was producing a happy effect on his poor brains, making him as bright and ready with a good reply as any one! And in their happiness they played at being children just as in the old days they had played at being grown-ups. Casting themselves down on the green, elastic, flower-sprinkled turf, they rolled one after the other down the smooth slopes of the terrace, the old "shepherd's steps," and by-and-by Johnnie, coming upon a patch of creeping thyme, rubbed his hands in the pale purple flowers, then rubbed her face to make it fragrant.

"Oh, 'tis sweet!" she cried. "Did 'ee ever see so many little flowers on the down?—'tis as if they came out just for us." Then, indicating the tiny milkwort faintly sprink-

ling the turf all about them, "Oh, the little blue darlings! Did 'ee ever see such a dear blue?"

"Oh, aye, a prettier blue nor that," said Johnnie. "'Tis just here, Marty," and pressing her down he kissed her on the eyelids a dozen times.

"You silly Johnnie!"

"Be I silly, Marty? but I love the red, too," and with that he kissed her on the mouth. "And, Marty, I do love the red on the breasties, too—won't 'ee let me have just one kiss there?"

And she, to please him, opened her dress a little way, but blushingly, though she was his wife and nobody was there to see, but it seemed strange to her out of doors with the sun overhead. Oh, 'twas all delicious! Never was earth so heavenly sweet as on that wide green down, sprinkled with innumerable little flowers, under the wide blue sky and the all-illuminating sun that shone into their hearts!

At length, rising to her knees and looking up the green slope, she cried out: "Oh, Johnnie, there's the old thorn tree! Do 'ee remember when we played at crows on it and had such a fright? 'Twas the last time we came here together. Come, let's go to the old tree and see how it looks now."

Johnnie all at once became grave, and said No, he wouldn't go to it for anything. She was curious and made him tell her the reason. He had never forgotten that day and the fear that came into his mind on account of the words the strange man had spoken. She didn't know what the words were: she had been too frightened to listen, and so he had to tell her.

"Then, 'tis a wishing-tree for sure," Marty exclaimed. When he asked her what a wishing-tree was, she could only say that her old grandmother, now dead, had told her. 'Tis a tree that knows us and can do us good and harm, but will do good only to some; but they must go to it and ask for its protection, and they must offer it something as well as pray to it. It must be something bright—a little jewel or coloured bead is best, and if you haven't got such a thing,

a bright-coloured ribbon, or strip of scarlet cloth or silk thread which you must tie to one of the twigs.

"But we hurted the tree, Marty, and 'twill do no good to we."

They were both grave now; then a hopeful thought came to her aid. They had not hurt the tree intentionally: the tree knew that—it knew more than any human being. They might go and stand side by side under its branches and ask it to forgive them, and grant them all their desires. But they must not go empty-handed, they must have some bright thing with them when making their prayer. Then she had a fresh inspiration. She would take a lock of her own bright hair and braid it with some of his, and tie it with a piece of scarlet thread.

Johnnie was pleased with this idea, and they agreed to take another Sunday afternoon walk and carry out their plan.

The projected walk was never taken, for by-and-by Marty's mother fell ill and Marty had to be with her, nursing her night and day, and months went by, and at length when her mother died she was not in a fit condition to go long walks and climb those long steep slopes. After the child was born it was harder than ever to leave the house, and Johnnie too had so much work at the farm that he had little inclination to go out on Sundays. They ceased to speak of the tree, and their long-projected pilgrimage was impracticable until they could see better days. But the wished time never came, for after the first child Marty was never strong; then a second child came, then a third, and so five years went by of toil and suffering and love, and the tree, with all their hopes and fears and intentions regarding it, was less and less in their minds and was all but forgotten. Only Johnnie, when at long intervals his master sent him to Salisbury with the cart, remembered it all only too well when, coming to the top of the down, he saw the old thorn directly before him. Passing it he would turn his face away not to see it too closely, or perhaps to avoid being recognised by it. Then came the time of their extreme poverty, when there was no work

at the farm and no one of their own people to help them tide over a season of scarcity, for the old people were dead or in the workhouse or so poor as to want help themselves. It was then that in his misery at the sight of his ailing anxious wife—the dear Marty of the beautiful vanished days—and his three little hungry children, that he went out into the field one dark night to get them food.

The whole sad history was in his mind as they slowly crawled up the hill, until it came to him that perhaps all their sufferings and this great disaster had been caused by the tree—by that something from the tree which had followed him, never resting in its mysterious enmity, until it broke him. Was it too late to repair that terrible mistake? A gleam of hope shone on his darkened mind, and he made his passionate appeal to the constable. He had no offering—his hands were powerless now; but at least he could stand by it and touch it with his body and face and pray for its forgiveness and for deliverance from the doom which threatened him. The constable had compassionately or from some secret motive granted his request, but alas! if in very truth the power he had come to believe in resided in the tree he was too late in seeking it.

The trial was soon over; by pleading guilty Johnnie had made it a very simple matter for the court. The main thing was to sentence him. By an unhappy chance the judge was in one of his occasional bad moods; he had been entertained too well by one of the local magnates on the previous evening and had sat late, drinking too much wine, with the result that he had a bad liver, with a mind to match it. He was only too ready to seize the first opportunity that offered—and poor Johnnie's case was the first that morning—of exercising the awful power a barbarous law had put into his hands. When the prisoner's defender declared that this was a case which called loudly for mercy the judge interrupted him to say that he was taking too much on himself, that he was in fact instructing the judge in his duties, which was a piece of presumption on his part. The other was quick to make a humble apology and to bring his perfunctory address to a conclusion. The judge,

in addressing the prisoner, said he had been unable to discover any extenuating circumstances in the case. The fact that he had a wife and family dependent on him only added to his turpitude, since it proved that no consideration could serve to deter him from a criminal act. Furthermore, in dealing with his case, he must take into account the prevalence of this particular form of crime; he would venture to say that it had been encouraged by an extreme leniency in many cases on the part of those whose sacred duty it was to administer the law of the land. A sterner and healthier spirit was called for at the present juncture. The time had come to make an example, and a more suitable case than the one now before him could not have been found for such a purpose. He would accordingly hold out no hope of a reprieve, but would counsel prisoner to make the best use of the short time remaining to him.

Johnnie standing in the dock appeared to the spectators to be in a half-dazed condition—as dull and spiritless a clodhopper as they had ever beheld. The judge and barristers, in their wigs and robes and gowns, were unlike any human beings he had ever looked on. He might have been transported to some other world, so strange did the whole scene appear to him. He only knew, or surmised, that all these important people were occupied in doing him to death, but the process, the meaning of their fine phrases, he could not follow. He looked at them, his glazed eyes travelling from face to face to be fixed finally on the judge in a vacant stare; but he scarcely saw them, he was all the time gazing on, and his mind occupied with, other forms and scenes invisible to the court. His village, his Marty, his dear little playmate of long ago, the sweet girl he had won, the wife and mother of his children with her white terrified face, clinging to him and crying in anguish: "Oh, Johnnie, what will they do to 'ee!" And all the time, with it all, he saw the vast green slope of the down with the Salisbury road lying like a narrow white band across it, and close to it, near the summit, the solitary old tree.

During the delivery of the sentence, and when he was led from the dock and conveyed back to the prison, that

image or vision was still present. He sat staring at the wall of his cell as he had stared at the judge, the fatal tree still before him. Never before had he seen it in that vivid way in which it appeared to him now, standing alone on the vast green down, under the wide sky, its four separate boles leaning a little away from each other, like the middle ribs of an open fan, holding up the wide, spread branches, the thin open foliage, the green leaves stained with rusty brown and purple: and the ivy rising like a slender black serpent of immense length springing from the roots, winding upwards and in and out among the grey branches, binding them together, and resting its round dark cluster of massed leaves on the topmost boughs. That green disc was the ivy-serpent's flat head and was the head of the whole tree, and there it had its eyes which gazed for ever over the wide downs, watching all living things, cattle and sheep and bird and men in their comings and goings; and although fast-rooted in the earth, following them too in all their ways, even as it had followed him to break him at last.

THE FOURTH MAGUS[1]

By R. B. Cunninghame Graham

SOME ancient writer or another—the Arabs frequently begin a tale "Says somebody"—relates the story of his life and miracles. Balthasar, Gaspar, and Melchior were, as he tells us, kings in Babylon. How Babylon came to be supplied with such a superfluity of kings he does not say, even if he knew why. Still, it was so, for all of them had crowns; rich mantles trimmed with ermine; fine Arab horses with legs as slim as a gazelle's, tails floating in the air, heads like a peacock's, eyes that shot fire, and with a general air as of a hippogriff. In fact, these kings had myrrh, frankincense, jewels, furs, scimitars, vessels of richest plate, and everything befitting to their state.

All this I know, for I have seen it all in pictures, and have rejoiced to learn their horses were of a pale sea-green or else of a rich cinnamon, colours quite natural in royal steeds, and blending well into the faint blue landscape of the Umbrian School of painters, who alone had the true vision of these kings. The circumstance that one of them was black was not the least bit disconcerting to the painters (no colour line exists in art), but on the contrary it helped them in their work, by furnishing a contrast to the pale, yellow faces of the other two. As they sat in their palaces, following the usual avocations of their kind, either being occupied in administering injustice or else in watching dancing-girls gyrate, strange news was brought into the town.

Shepherds, all seated on the ground, watching their sheep folded inside a net of ropes, their dogs beside them,

[1] From "Hope." By permission of Frederick A. Stokes Company.

and their thoughts fixed on the heavens—as often happens with people of their kind, which in itself accounts why they so often lose their sheep—had seen a wondrous star.

Lustrous and bright as Sirius, redder than Aldebáran, and far more luminous than Zubenel-Chamali or Altair, it lighted all the sky. Around it was a space as if the other stars had all agreed they were not worthy even to feel its radiance fall upon them, and it appeared to beckon, as the shepherds thought, and move a little towards the West, as if inviting them to follow in its wake.

Night after night the star appeared in the same place, just up above their heads. At last, seeing, as shepherds will, something miraculous in the affair, they left their flocks—for, after all, what is a sheep or two beside so bright a star—and sought out a Wise Man. After consideration and due examination of the case, he solved the mystery, telling them that a mighty prophet would be born, who should raise up the lowly, redress injustices, cast down the powerful, make rough places smooth, and be the champion of the weak the whole world over; and all they had to do was but to follow in the way the star directed them, and it would take them to the place.

Such things not being for the kind of men they were, they went to Babylon, and, walking up and down about the streets, began to tell what they had seen and heard to everyone they met. Little by little the fame of what they said filled all men's minds, and in bazaars and markets, in fondaks, stores, and caravanserais, the wondrous rumour grew.

Lastly, as happens in such cases, now, as in Babylon, it passed the palace gates. The kings were fired with it at once, either being filled with faith and hatred of injustice, things natural to men of their estate, or else impelled by that desire of movement which in kings plays the part imagination plays in poets and sets their blood astir.

So taking horse, and followed by a fitting retinue carrying the presents which the painters of the Umbrian School have seen so well, and have depicted for us in the middle distance of their canvases, they set out on their

quest. All the world knows the story of their ride, and how, following the star over the plains, through the defiles of mountains, and across rivers, at last it stopped above the stable in which the ox and ass were feeding, making a nimbus with their warm clover-scented breath round the child's head as it lay sleeping in the crib. Their reward was instant, for they beheld their faith made patent by their work, a thing that few attain, however firmly they believe, and whilst men read the simple story of their brief passage through the scene of history, they still will love them, as long as faith and stars continue and shepherds watch their sheep upon the plains. They saw the birth of God made man, and, after having seen it and adored, became immortal; but the fourth Magus, he who lingered on the road, saw man made God, and is forgotten and unknown to anyone except to those who, like some diving negro, seek their pearls in the unnavigated creeks of ancient chroniclers.

That Nicanor hangs out of fashion on his rusty nail, and Gaspar, Balthasar, and Melchior still are household words, is perhaps natural, for they by faith were justified, and faith is the true royal road to fame. King Nicanor followed the path along which man from the beginning of the world has worn out countless million pairs of shoes, blistered infinities of feet, and quite as naturally has been forgotten by his kind.

This, then, is how the thing fell out.

When the three kings had ridden off upon their quest, King Nicanor was left behind, owing to his horse having cast a shoe. When the Chaldean smith had shod the horse, after considerable delay—for then as now in blacksmith's shops, nothing was ready, and not a single shoe in the whole place would fit—Balthasar, Melchior, and Gaspar had vanished on the plain, and it was almost night. Determining to make at least a start, for being a Wise Man and from the East, where people know the benefit of camping even a league outside the city walls upon the first day of a journey, Nicanor got on his horse and sallied forth, passing the horseshoe arch of the great gate in the

town wall towards the west, about an hour before the sun had set.

The camp was pitched just by the side of a wide crossing of a river edged by palm trees and broken into several channels by beds of sand and stones. Right at the crossing the feet of camels and of mules, passing for centuries, had made a well-defined deep track, in which the riders' feet were almost on the ground as they rode through to reach the stream, their horses stumbling occasionally as they struck their feet against the sides. Young date palms springing from the sand struggled against the nibbling of the camels and the mules that snatched a mouthful as they passed. A haze of orange fading into pink outlined the palms upon the farther bank, showing each knot upon their trunks. In the light air the leaves just stirred and made a creaking sound, unlike the whispering of the oaks and beeches of the north. White bones, and here and there a skull, showed where a baggage animal had been released from toil, and round them the sparse grass grew just a little greener, and myriads of the minutest flies crawled in and out between the vertebræ of the dry backbone that would never more bend underneath a pack.

Sitting upon his horse, with one leg crossed upon its neck, the long reins dangling almost to the ground as it hung down its head a little to snatch a mouthful of the grass, the Magus gave directions to his men to pitch his tents.

Quickly the packs were lifted off the mules' and camels' backs, and the tents rose as if by magic from the sandy grass, flecked here and there with tiny jonquils: a sky of flowery stars spread or reflected on the ground.

The evening call to prayer, which Mahomet must have perpetuated, for it could not have sprung into his brain unaided, being in itself a necessary action after the daily battle with the sun, rang out, and for a moment all the camp was prostrate, thanking some god or other for the evening breeze.

Slowly King Nicanor got off his horse, and a black slave tied it up to the rope of camel's hair which, stretched be-

tween two stakes, was set before his tent. Its lofty saddle stood up like an island outlined against the deep blue clouds, for nothing broke the horizon to the south but the tents and the feeding animals. As Nicanor sat on a saddle-cloth before his tent thinking upon the wondrous star of which the shepherds had brought tidings, and inwardly determining to push on at the first light of day to catch up his companions, three or four figures came out of the palm grove, and dragging themselves slowly across the sand and grass, stood in a row before him and pointed upwards to the sky with a mute gesture of despair. Famine had wasted them almost beyond the semblance of mankind. Their sunken stomachs and protruding ribs made them look something like a fossil fish embedded in the coal-measures, whilst their thin arms and legs hardly sustained their feet and hands, which looked enormous in comparison to their shrunk, wasted limbs. Save for a wisp of dirty cotton rags about their loins they were as naked as a skeleton, and their parched tongues were rough and horny, like a parrot's, within their parchment-looking mouths.

The Magus gazed at them fascinated, and in a moment the wondrous star and the new prophet to be born into the world were both forgotten in the horror of the scene. As he stood petrified, from every side, from hollows scooped out of the sand, from tufts of thorny shrubs, thin tottering figures rose and staggered to his tent. Women held children by the hand, and miserable boys supported aged men, whilst an old crone crawled on her hands and knees close to his feet, and then, raising herself a little, pointed a skinny finger to the sky. None of them spoke, but the mute glance of their beseeching eyes struck horror to his soul. When he could speak he called for bread, and with his men cut it in slices, then moistening it in water passed it along the ranks. It vanished as by magic, but still the line grew longer, and in the moonlight the famine-stricken people looked like a troop of wolves that had surrounded some belated traveller on the plain. Some of the people snatched the barley from the horses and the mules as they stood feeding, whilst others struggled for the crumbs,

fighting like starving dogs. King Nicanor called to his men and sent back two of them to bring a mule laden with bread from town, as the throng seemed to grow as if the people sprang up from the sand. The mule-load disappeared almost as quickly as if it had been thrown into the sea. Night waned and the first flush of dawn still found the Magus and his camp besieged with famine-stricken folk. Several days passed, and then the starvelings, having eaten, vanished as speedily as they had come, leaving no trace of their appearance except upon the Wise Man's soul. Then, after resting for a day, he once more set out on his way. The sun was rising as he struck his camp, and as he started once again towards the west his thoughts reverted to the birth of the great prophet, the wondrous star, and to his friends, whom he supposed would now be almost at their journey's end.

He caught himself at times almost regretting the delay the starving folk had brought about, and then again thought that if the prophet to be born had come to heal the sorrows of the world, to clothe the naked, heal the sick, and feed the hungry, that at least he had tried humbly to do likewise, though not himself inspired; and that there still was left good work to do on earth during the childhood of the great one, whose birth he hoped to see.

So he rode on, finding upon his path here a blind man and there some wayfarer sitting dejectedly beside his dying horse. Each case delayed him, and when he reached a town his fame had gone before him, and halt and sick, those who had had their eyes burned out for theft, and others who had lost a hand or foot, lopped off to show that justice was as deaf to pity as she is blind to facts, swarmed round him and implored his alms.

Sometimes when passing a lone duar on the plains, just at the saint's house, with its tuft of feathery palms, some wretch would sally forth and, rushing to his side, clutch fast his stirrup, exclaiming, "I take refuge with you," and he would stop and look into his case.

Still, though he knew the prophet must by this time be a youth and growing to a man, when he escaped from the

accumulating cares his pilgrimage had brought upon him he pressed on towards the west. Across the heated plains at times he toiled, mocked by the mirage, and with the heat reflected from some stony tract burning his face, and sometimes through some mountain pass where the frost froze his stirrups to his boots, he kept upon his way, just as men labour towards a goal they know it is impossible to reach, unconscious that they carry it within themselves from the first day on which they had set out.

Years passed, and not an animal which he had brought from Babylon remained alive, some having died upon the road, and others of old age, in the long halts he made in cities where some injustice or another had detained him on his way. Still, as he lingered, endeavouring to do good, news reached him now and then about the doings of the prophet whose birth he once had hoped to see, and when he got the news a sort of fever would come over him, making him long to see him ere he died.

The flight of time had not left Nicanor unaltered, and from the sleek and prosperous king who had left Babylon so many years ago, young, careless, and with hope springing in his heart, he had become a weather-beaten man, grizzled and careworn, and in his eyes had come that look of watchfulness that comes to those who pass their lives upon the road.

The horse he rode, a darkish bay of the Keheilan breed, he had received from an old Bedouin chief near Baalbec, whose son he nursed when stricken with the plague. No other horse throughout Irak could be compared with it, either for shape or blood. His full round eyes, and ears lean as a lynx's, his round and flinty feet, broad forehead, silky mane, and tail he carried like a flag, with the sunk channel running down his spine, which, as the Arabs say, could carry off the dew, showed him an archetype of the breed which alone amongst all the horses of the world is truly noble and fit for kings to ride. Years had fallen lightly on King Nicanor himself, leaving him upright, though they had flecked his hair with grey upon the temples, and given him that gravity which many Orientals seem to

acquire in middle life, as it were, by an effort of the mind. Most of his followers had returned home or died, except a man or two who, by long converse with their master, had imbibed some of his ideas, or else found life upon the road too pleasant to desert and dwell again in the dull round of cities, seeing the sun rise from behind the selfsame mountain range and sink into the plain, at evening, leaving no sign to mark its passage through the sky, just as a stone sinks out of sight into a pond.

Now and again strange rumours reached the wandering Magus of what was going on in the far country he had left home to visit, and how the prophet who had come had gathered to himself a rout of fishermen, of outcasts, publicans, and women, who, it appeared, all followed him about, striving to found no kingdom, but listening to his words in desert places and on the tops of hills. Much did he ponder on the tidings, thinking at first the prophet must be mad, and then, as he thought more upon the case, seeing a half-resemblance to his own way of life, that is, of course, with that due difference of their respective standings in the world, taken into account.

At last, for even in the East all things draw to an end, he found himself close to Jerusalem. Halting upon a hill which overlooked the town, he pitched his camp near to a well, close to which grew a grove of olive trees. As he sat, after so many years, gazing down on the city where he had heard the prophet lived, whose wondrous birth, heralded by the bright star, had induced him in his early manhood to set forth from Babylon, he looked back on his life. The city lay beneath him, bathed in the golden haze that in the East hides mouldering palaces and tottering weed-grown walls into whose chinks dart lizards in their play, blots out the dirt and squalor and gilds the broken potsherds on the great dunghills by the gates, setting all floating in a sea of glory, above whose waters float the feathery palms.

After the custom, which in his case was now well sanctified by time, the camp of the Wise Man—for now at last, being in Jerusalem, he was a Wise Man of the East—was

overrun by beggars, halt and blind. From them he learned that on the morrow the Romans, who had become the masters of the place since he set out upon his travels from the East, were going to execute two thieves, and one who, as they said, was to be put to death for having called himself a king.

After the beggars had been supplied with bread, a wandering fakir came to the camp, and sitting down before the tent entered into one of those long conversations which in the East supply the place of newspapers, filling exactly the same use even to the extent of tinging all the news with the narrator's sympathies, just as a newspaper is but the mirror of the mind of those who write in it.

Long did the dervish talk about the state of Palestine, the price of bread and barley, the raids the tribes had made on one another's herds, and lastly, of the execution which was going to be held.

The thieves he touched on lightly, saying they both were sons of mothers who had never yet said no. He thought the name of one of them was Dimas, the other Gestas, but was not sure of their identity. Of the third sufferer, the one who had been called a king, he had more details, and remarked, by the sun's light, he is a man.

Little by little he unfolded all he knew about the man who was to pay the penalty of being called a king. It seemed that prodigies had happened at his birth. A star had heralded it, and three Wise Men had come out of the East . . . wisdom is in the East, the stranger said, with the air of one who enunciates a fact that none can controvert. King Nicanor, who all the time had listened patiently, broke in upon the tale, exclaiming: "These Wise Men, I know them well, their names are Gaspar, Melchior, and Balthasar. They are my kinsmen; are they still in the town?"

The dervish looked at him, as people look upon a man who, without rhyme or reason, suddenly has a lapse of memory, and answered: "In the town! . . . Why, they were here, as I heard tell, some three-and-thirty years ago, and only stayed a night."

Drawing his hand across his eyes the Magus muttered: "Three-and-thirty years ago—it seems but yesterday when I set out. This prophet then of whom you speak, who dies to-morrow, is the wondrous babe of whom the shepherds told of yesterday—that is, three-and-thirty years ago; but he was to redress men's wrongs, lift up the down-trodden, to heal the halt, make the blind see, fight the oppressor, and be a shield unto the weak. Can it be then that in Jerusalem they execute a man for striving for such ends?"

If the fakir had thought the speaker mad at first, he now looked on him as a lunatic.

"Where have you lived," he said, "and do not know that such a man since the beginning of the world can have but such a fate?"

King Nicanor, after a pause, said: "I have lived, as I now see, upon the road, never remaining very long in any place; but I remember now and then it has amazed me, that when I fed the hungry, as you say this man who is to die has done, that many hated me, saying I did it all for the love of praise."

Hours came and hours passed as they sat talking, and by degrees King Nicanor heard all the prophet's life, his love of liberty, his truth, his justice, charity, and how the people loved him, especially the lowly and the meek, and of the special charm he had for women, the sweetness of his nature, and how no one who ever heard him but fell beneath his spell.

At last, as dawn began to creep into the sky with a pale milky whiteness that gradually extended through the deep, blue eastern night, just as a drop or two of mastic tinges the water in a glass, King Nicanor rose to his feet and said: "It is now time to rest. Fate has deprived me of the joy of being present at the birth of him the star announced; I can at least be present at his death . . . and birth and death are not so very different, after all."

Fate, though, that mocks our resolutions, making us but the creatures of itself, had almost made him miss the chance, for in the morning he found his camp besieged with a great horde of beggars and of folk who had heard that one who,

some said, was a fool and others a Wise Man, but who in any case gave bread away to all who asked for it, had come into the town.

All day he sat and gave his alms and listened to their plaints, until the seventh hour or the eighth, and then mounting his horse, rode up to Golgotha. Darkness was spread upon the land as he toiled up the rocky path, making his way with difficulty through the press.

Right at the top, in the half-light he saw three figures set on high. Two of them hung inert; the third just stirred and asked for drink, and Nicanor observed that his long hair hung down upon one side and half obscured his face.

Just at that moment a young man came running with a sponge of vinegar upon a reed, and, holding it up to the middle figure, pushed it into his mouth. He drank, and after a long shiver had run through his body, he gave a cry so wild and terrible that the dark bay Kehlani that the king rode reared up and snorted, pawing the air with his fore feet, and as he struck the ground King Nicanor saw that the middle figure hung limp upon the cross.

THE GHOST-SHIP[1]

By Richard Middleton

FAIRFIELD is a little village lying near the Portsmouth Road, about half-way between London and the sea. Strangers who now and then find it by accident, call it a pretty, old-fashioned place; we who live in it and call it home don't find anything very pretty about it, but we should be sorry to live anywhere else. Our minds have taken the shape of the inn and the church and the green, I suppose. At all events, we never feel comfortable out of Fairfield.

Of course the cockneys, with their vasty houses and noise-ridden streets, can call us rustics if they choose; but for all that, Fairfield is a better place to live in than London. Doctor says that when he goes to London his mind is bruised with the weight of the houses, and he was a cockney born. He had to live there himself when he was a little chap, but he knows better now. You gentlemen may laugh,—perhaps some of you come from London-way—but it seems to me that a witness like that is worth a gallon of arguments.

Dull? Well, you might find it dull, but I assure you that I've listened to all the London yarns you have spun tonight, and they're absolutely nothing to the things that happen at Fairfield. It's because of our way of thinking, and minding our own business. If one of your Londoners was set down on the green of a Saturday night when the ghosts of the lads who died in the war keep tryst with the lasses who lie in the churchyard, he couldn't help being curious and

[1] This story is reprinted by permission of Mitchell Kennerley, the authorised publisher in America of Richard Middleton's books. It is taken from the volume, "The Ghost Ship and Other Stories."

interfering, and then the ghosts would go somewhere where it was quieter. But we just let them come and go and don't make any fuss, and in consequence Fairfield is the ghostiest place in all England. Why, I've seen a headless man sitting on the edge of the well in broad daylight, and the children playing about his feet as if he were their father. Take my word for it, spirits know when they are well off as much as human beings.

Still, I must admit that the thing I'm going to tell you about was queer even for our part of the world, where three packs of ghost-hounds hunt regularly during the season, and blacksmith's great-grandfather is busy all night shoeing the dead gentlemen's horses. Now that's a thing that wouldn't happen in London, because of their interfering ways; but blacksmith he lies up aloft and sleeps as quiet as a lamb. Once when he had a bad head he shouted down to them not to make so much noise, and in the morning he found an old guinea left on the anvil as an apology. He wears it on his watch-chain now. But I must get on with my story; if I start telling you about the queer happenings at Fairfield I'll never stop.

It all came of the great storm in the spring of '97, the year that we had two great storms. This was the first one, and I remember it well, because I found in the morning that it had lifted the thatch of my pigsty into the widow's garden as clean as a boy's kite. When I looked over the hedge, widow—Tom Lamport's widow that was—was prodding for her nasturtiums with a daisy-grubber. After I had watched her for a little I went down to the Fox and Grapes to tell landlord what she had said to me. Landlord he laughed, being a married man and at ease with the sex. "Come to that," he said, "the tempest has blowed something into my field. A kind of a ship I think it would be."

I was surprised at that until he explained that it was only a ghost-ship, and would do no hurt to the turnips. We argued that it had been blown up from the sea at Portsmouth, and then we talked of something else. There were two slates down at the parsonage and a big tree in Lumley's meadow. It was a rare storm.

I reckon the wind had blown our ghosts all over England. They were coming back for days afterward with foundered horses, and as footsore as possible, and they were so glad to get back to Fairfield that some of them walked up the street crying like little children. Squire said that his great-grandfather's great-grandfather hadn't looked so dead-beat since the battle of Naseby, and he's an educated man.

What with one thing and another, I should think it was a week before we got straight again, and then one afternoon I met the landlord on the green, and he had a worried face. "I wish you'd come and have a look at that ship in my field," he said to me. "It seems to me it's leaning real hard on the turnips. I can't bear thinking what the missus will say when she sees it."

I walked down the lane with him, and, sure enough, there was a ship in the middle of his field, but such a ship as no man had seen on the water for three hundred years, let alone in the middle of a turnip-field. It was all painted black, and covered with carvings, and there was a great bay-window in the stern, for all the world like the squire's drawing-room. There was a crowd of little black cannon on deck and looking out of her port-holes, and she was anchored at each end to the hard ground. I have seen the wonders of the world on picture post-cards, but I have never seen anything to equal that.

"She seems very solid for a ghost-ship," I said, seeing that landlord was bothered.

"I should say it's a betwixt and between," he answered, puzzling it over; "but it's going to spoil a matter of fifty turnips, and missus she'll want it moved." We went up to her and touched the side, and it was as hard as a real ship. "Now, there's folks in England would call that very curious," he said.

Now, I don't know much about ships, but I should think that that ghost-ship weighed a solid two hundred tons, and it seemed to me that she had come to stay; so that I felt sorry for the landlord, who was a married man. "All the horses in Fairfield won't move her out of my turnips," he said, frowning at her.

Just then we heard a noise on her deck, and we looked up and saw that a man had come out of her front cabin and was looking down at us very peaceably. He was dressed in a black uniform set off with rusty gold lace, and he had a great cutlass by his side in a brass sheath. "I'm Captain Bartholomew Roberts," he said in a gentleman's voice, put in for recruits. "I seem to have brought her rather far up the harbour."

"Harbour!" cried landlord. "Why, you're fifty miles from the sea."

Captain Roberts didn't turn a hair. "So much as that, is it?" he said coolly. "Well, it's of no consequence."

Landlord was a bit upset at this. "I don't want to be unneighbourly," he said, "but I wish you hadn't brought your ship into my field. You see, my wife sets great store on these turnips."

The captain took a pinch of snuff out of a fine gold box that he pulled out of his pocket, and dusted his fingers with a silk handkerchief in a very genteel fashion. "I'm only here for a few months," he said, "but if a testimony of my esteem would pacify your good lady, I should be content," and with the words he loosed a great gold brooch from the neck of his coat and tossed it down to landlord.

Landlord blushed as red as a strawberry. "I'm not denying she's fond of jewelry," he said; "but it's too much for half a sackful of turnips." Indeed, it was a handsome brooch.

The captain laughed. "Tut, man!" he said, "it's a forced sale, and you deserve a good price. Say no more about it," and nodding good day to us, he turned on his heel and went into the cabin. Landlord walked back up the lane like a man with a weight off his mind. "That tempest has blowed me a bit of luck," he said; "the missus will be main pleased with that brooch. It's better than blacksmith's guinea any day."

'97 was Jubilee year—the year of the second Jubilee, you remember, and we had great doings at Fairfield, so that we hadn't much time to bother about the ghost-ship, though, anyhow, it isn't our way to meddle in

things that don't concern us. Landlord he saw his tenant once or twice when he was hoeing his turnips, and passed the time of day, and landlord's wife wore her new brooch to church every Sunday. But we didn't mix much with the ghosts at any time, all except an idiot lad there was in the village, and he didn't know the difference between a man and a ghost, poor innocent! On Jubilee day, however, somebody told Captain Roberts why the church bells were ringing, and he hoisted a flag and fired off his guns like a loyal Englishman. 'Tis true the guns were shotted, and one of the round shot knocked a hole in Farmer Johnstone's barn, but nobody thought much of that in such a season of rejoicing.

It wasn't till our celebrations were over that we noticed that anything was wrong in Fairfield. 'Twas shoemaker who told me first about it one morning at the Fox and Grapes. "You know my great-great-uncle?" he said to me.

"You mean Joshua, the quiet lad?" I answered, knowing him well.

"Quiet!" said shoemaker, indignantly. "Quiet you call him, coming home at three o'clock every morning as drunk as a magistrate and waking up the whole house with his noise!"

"Why, it can't be Joshua," I said, for I knew him for one of the most respectable young ghosts in the village.

"Joshua it is," said the shoemaker; "and one of these nights he'll find himself out in the street if he isn't careful."

This kind of talk shocked me, I can tell you, for I don't like to hear a man abusing his own family, and I could hardly believe that a steady youngster like Joshua had taken to drink. But just then in came butcher Aylwin in such a temper that he could hardly drink his beer. "The young puppy! the young puppy!" he kept on saying, and it was some time before shoemaker and I found out that he was talking about his ancestor that fell at Senlac.

"Drink?" said the shoemaker, hopefully, for we all like company in our misfortune, and butcher nodded grimly. "The young noodle!" he said, emptying his tankard.

Well, after that I kept my ears open, and it was the same story all over the village. There was hardly a young man among all the ghosts of Fairfield who didn't roll home in the small hours of the morning the worse for liquor. I used to wake up in the night and hear them stumble past my house singing outrageous songs. The worst of it was that we couldn't keep the scandal to ourselves, and the folk at Greenhill began to talk of "sodden Fairfield" and taught their children to sing a song about us:

> Sodden Fairfield, sodden Fairfield,
> Has no use for bread and butter,
> Rum for breakfast, rum for dinner,
> Rum for tea, and rum for supper!

We are easy-going in our village, but we didn't like that.

Of course we soon found out where the young fellows went to get the drink, and landlord was terribly cut up that his tenant should have turned out so badly; but his wife wouldn't hear of parting with the brooch, so he couldn't give the captain notice to quit. But as time went on, things grew from bad to worse, and at all hours of the day you would see those young reprobates sleeping it off on the village green. Nearly every afternoon a ghost-wagon used to jolt down to the ship with a lading of rum, and though the older ghosts seemed inclined to give the captain's hospitality the go-by, the youngsters were neither to hold nor to bind.

So one afternoon when I was taking my nap, I heard a knock at the door, and there was parson, looking very serious, like a man with a job before him that he didn't altogether relish.

"I'm going down to talk to the captain about all this drunkenness in the village, and I want you to come with me," he said straight out.

I can't say that I fancied the visit much myself, and I tried to hint to parson that as, after all, they were only a lot of ghosts, it didn't much matter.

"Dead or alive, I'm responsible for their good conduct," he said, "and I'm going to do my duty and put a stop to

this continued disorder. And you are coming with me, John Simmons."

So I went, parson being a persuasive kind of man.

We went down to the ship, and as we approached her, I could see the captain tasting the air on deck. When he saw parson he took off his hat very politely, and I can tell you that I was relieved to find that he had a proper respect for the cloth. Parson acknowledged his salute, and spoke out stoutly enough.

"Sir, I should be glad to have a word with you."

"Come on board, sir, come on board," said the captain, and I could tell by his voice that he knew why we were there.

Parson and I climbed up an uneasy kind of ladder, and the captain took us into the great cabin at the back of the ship, where the bay-window was. It was the most wonderful place you ever saw in your life, all full of gold and silver plate, swords with jewelled scabbards, carved oak chairs, and great chests that looked as though they were bursting with guineas. Even parson was surprised, and he did not shake his head very hard when captain took down some silver cups and poured us out a drink of rum. I tasted mine, and I don't mind saying that it changed my view of things entirely. There was nothing betwixt and between about that rum, and I felt that it was ridiculous to blame the lads for drinking too much of stuff like that. It seemed to fill my veins with honey and fire.

Parson put the case squarely to the captain, but I didn't listen much to what he said. I was busy sipping my drink and looking through the window at the fishes swimming to and fro over landlord's turnips. Just then it seemed the most natural thing in the world that they should be there, though afterward, of course, I could see that that proved it was a ghost-ship.

But even then I thought it was queer when I saw a drowned sailor float by in the thin air, with his hair and beard all full of bubbles. It was the first time I had seen anything quite like that at Fairfield.

All the time I was regarding the wonders of the deep, par-

son was telling Captain Roberts how there was no peace or rest in the village owing to the curse of drunkenness, and what a bad example the youngsters were setting to the older ghosts. The captain listened very attentively, and put in a word only now and then about boys being boys and young men sowing their wild oats. But when parson had finished his speech, he filled up our silver cups and said to parson with a flourish:

"I should be sorry to cause trouble anywhere where I have been made welcome, and you will be glad to hear that I put to sea to-morrow night. And now you must drink me a prosperous voyage."

So we all stood up and drank the toast with honor, and that noble rum was like hot oil in my veins.

After that, captain showed us some of the curiosities he had brought back from foreign parts, and we were greatly amazed, though afterward I couldn't clearly remember what they were. And then I found myself walking across the turnips with parson, and I was telling him of the glories of the deep that I had seen through the window of the ship. He turned on me severely.

"If I were you, John Simmons," he said, "I should go straight home to bed." He has a way of putting things that wouldn't occur to an ordinary man, has parson, and I did as he told me.

Well, next day it came on to blow, and it blew harder, and harder till about eight o'clock at night I heard a noise and looked out into the garden. I dare say you wouldn't believe me,—it seems a bit tall even to me,—but the wind had lifted the thatch of my pigsty into the widow's garden a second time. I thought I wouldn't wait to hear what widow had to say about it, so I went across the green to the Fox and Grapes, and the wind was so strong that I danced along on tiptoe like a girl at the fair. When I got to the inn, landlord had to help me shut the door. It seemed as though a dozen goats were pushing against it to come in out of the storm.

"It's a powerful tempest," he said, drawing the beer. "I hear there's a chimney down at Dickory End."

"It's a funny thing how these sailors know about the weather," I answered. "When the captain said he was going to-night, I was thinking it would take a capful of wind to carry the ship back to sea; and now here's more than a capful."

"Ah, yes," said landlord; "it's to-night he goes true enough, and mind you, though he treated me handsome over the rent, I'm not sure it's a loss to the village. I don't hold with gentrice who fetch their drink from London instead of helping local traders to get their living."

"But you haven't got any rum like his," I said, to draw him out.

His neck grew red above his collar, and I was afraid I'd gone too far; but after a while he got his breath with a grunt. "John Simmons," he said, "if you've come down here this windy night to talk a lot of fool's talk, you've wasted a journey."

Well, of course, then I had to smooth him down with praising his rum, and Heaven forgive me for swearing it was better than captain's. For the like of that rum no living lips have tasted save mine and parson's. But somehow or other I brought landlord round, and presently we must have a glass of his best to prove its quality.

"Beat that if you can," he cried, and we both raised our glasses to our mouths, only to stop half-way and look at each other in amaze. For the wind that had been howling outside like an outrageous dog had all of a sudden turned as melodious as the carol-boys of a Christmas eve.

"Surely that's not my Martha," whispered landlord, Martha being his great-aunt, who lived in the loft overhead.

We went to the door, and the wind burst it open so that the handle was driven clean into the plaster wall, but we didn't think about that at the time; for over our heads, sailing very comfortably through the windy stars, was the ship that had passed the summer in landlord's field. Her port-holes and her bay-window were blazing with lights, and there was a noise of singing and fiddling on her decks. "He's gone!" shouted landlord above the storm, "and he's taken

half the village with him." I could only nod in answer, not having lungs like bellows of leather.

In the morning we were able to measure the strength of the storm, and over and above my pigsty, there was damage enough wrought in the village to keep us busy. True it was that the children had to break down no branches for the firing that autumn, since the wind had strewn the woods with more than they could carry away. Many of our ghosts were scattered abroad, but this time very few came back, all the young men having sailed with captain; and not only ghosts, for a poor half-witted lad was missing, and we reckoned that he had stowed himself away or perhaps shipped as cabin-boy, not knowing any better.

What with the lamentations of the ghost girls and the grumblings of families who had lost ancestors, the village was upset for awhile, and the funny thing was that it was the folk who had complained most of the carryings-on of the youngsters who made most noise now that they were gone. I hadn't any sympathy with shoemaker or butcher, who ran about saying how much they missed their lads, but it made me grieve to hear the poor bereaved girls calling their lovers by name on the village green at nightfall. It didn't seem fair to me that they should have lost their men a second time, after giving up life in order to join them, as like as not. Still, not even a spirit can be sorry for ever, and after a few months we made up our mind that the folk who had sailed in the ship were never coming back; and we didn't talk about it any more.

And then one day, I dare say it would be a couple of years after, when the whole business was quite forgotten, who should come trapesing along the road from Portsmouth but the daft lad who had gone away with the ship without waiting till he was dead to become a ghost. You never saw such a boy as that in all your life. He had a great rusty cutlass hanging to a string at his waist, and he was tattooed all over in fine colours, so that even his face looked like a girl's sampler. He had a handkerchief in his hand full of foreign shells and old-fashioned pieces of small money, very curious, and he walked up to the well outside his mother's

house and drew himself a drink as if he had been nowhere in particular.

The worst of it was that he had come back as soft-headed as he went, and try as we might, we couldn't get anything reasonable out of him. He talked a lot of gibberish about keelhauling and walking the plank and crimson murders—things which a decent lad should know nothing about, so that it seemed to me that for all his manners captain had been more of a pirate than a gentleman mariner. But to draw sense out of that boy was as hard as picking cherries off a crab-tree. One silly tale he had that he kept on drifting back to, and to hear him you would have thought that it was the only thing that happened to him in his life.

"We was at anchor," he would say, "off an island called the Basket of Flowers, and the sailors caught a lot of parrots, and we were teaching them to swear. Up and down the decks, up and down the decks, and the language they used was dreadful. Then we looked up and saw the masts of the Spanish ship outside the harbour. Outside the harbour they were, so we threw the parrots in the sea, and sailed out to fight. And all the parrots were drowneded in the sea, and the language they used was dreadful."

That's the sort of a boy he was—nothing but silly talk of parrots when we asked him about the fighting. And we never had a chance of teaching him better, for two days after he ran away again, and hasn't been seen since.

That's my story, and I assure you that things like that are happening at Fairfield all the time. The ship has never come back, but somehow, as people grow older, they seem to think that one of these windy nights she'll come sailing in over the hedges with all the lost ghosts on board. Well, when she comes, she'll be welcome. There's one ghost lass that has never grown tired of waiting for her lad to return. Every night you'll see her out on the green, straining her poor eyes with looking for the mast-lights among the stars. A faithful lass you'd call her and I'm thinking you'd be right.

Landlord's field wasn't a penny the worse for the visit; but they do say that since then the turnips that have been grown in it have tasted of rum.

BUSINESS IS BUSINESS

By "John Trevena"

TAVY river rises on Cranmere, flows down Tavy Cleave, divides the parish of Mary Tavy from that of Peter Tavy, passes Tavy Mount, and leaves Dartmoor at Tavystock, or Tavistock as it is now spelt. Each Dartmoor river confers its name, or a portion of it, upon certain features of its own district. The Okements meet at Okehampton, and one of them has Oke Tor, which has been corrupted into Ock and even Hock. Even the tiny Lyd has its Lydford. Each river has also it particular characteristic. The East Okement is the river of ferns, the Teign the river of woods, the Taw the river of noise, the Dart the river of silence, and the Tavy is the river of rocks. Tavy Cleave, from the top of Ger Tor, presents a grand and solemn spectacle of rock masses piled one upon the other; it is a valley of rocks, relieved only by the foaming little river.

Mary Tavy is a straggling village of unredeemed ugliness, wild and bare. It lies exposed on the side of the moor and is swept by every wind, for not a bush or even a bramble will be found upon the rounded hills adjoining. Once the place was a mining centre of some importance. The black moor has been torn into pits and covered with mounds by the tin-streamers in early days, and more recently by the copper-miners. All around Mary Tavy appear the dismal ruins of these mines, or wheals as they are called. Peter Tavy, across the river, is not so dreary, but is equally exposed. This region during the winter is one of the most inhospitable spots to be found in England.

In Peter Tavy there lived, until quite recently, an elderly man, who might have posed as the most incompetent creature in the West Country. It is hardly necessary to say

he did not do so; on the contrary, he posed as a many-sided genius. He occupied a hideous little tin house, which would have been condemned at a glance in those parts of the country where building by-laws are in existence. At one time and another he had borrowed the dregs of paint-pots, and had endeavoured to decorate the exterior. As a result, one portion was black, another white, and another blue. Over the door a board appeared setting forth the accomplishments of Peter Tavy, as he may here be called. According to his own showing he was a clock-maker; he was a photographer; he was a Dartmoor guide; he was a dealer in antiquities; he was a Reeve attached to the Manor of Lydford; and he was a purveyor of manure. This board was in its way a masterpiece of fiction. Once upon a time a resident, anxious to put Peter's powers to the test, sent him an old kitchen-clock to repair. He examined it, and gave it as his opinion that the undertaking would require time. When a year had passed the owner of the clock requested Peter to report progress. He replied that the work was getting on, but " 'Twas a slow business and 'twould take another six months to make a job of it." At the end of that period the clock was removed, almost by force, and it was then discovered that Peter had sold most of the interior mechanism to a singularly innocent tourist as Druidical remains unearthed by him in one of the shafts of Wheal Betsy.

As a photographer he carried his impudence still further. Some one had given him an old camera and a few plates. He began at once to inveigle visitors—chiefly elderly ladies, "half-dafty maidens" he impolitely called them—down Tavy Cleave, where he would pose them on rocks and pretend to photograph them with plates which had already been exposed more than once. "If I doan't get a picture first time, I goes on till I du," he explained. Once, when Peter announced " 'twas a fine picture this time," a gentleman of the party reminded him he had omitted to remove the cap from the lens. Peter was not to be caught that way: "I took 'en," he said, "I took 'en, but yew warn't looking."

As a guide upon the moor Peter was an equal failure. He ought to have known Dartmoor after living upon it all his

life; the truth was, he would have lost his way up on the road to Tavistock had he strayed from it a moment. Visitors, lured by the notice-board, had approached him from time to time with the request to be guided to Cranmere. Peter would take them along Tavy Cleave for a mile, then assure them a storm was coming up and it would be necessary to seek shelter as soon as possible, hurry them back, and demand half-a-guinea in return for his services. Peter had never been to Cranmere Pool, and had no idea how to get there. Sometimes a party would insist upon proceeding, in spite of the guide's warning, and in such cases the bewildered Peter would have to be shown the way home by his victims. He would demand the half-guinea all the same.

As a dealer in antiquities nothing came amiss. Broken pipes, bits of crockery, old mining-tools, any rubbish rotting or rusting upon the peat was gathered and classified as Druidical remains. No one knew where Peter had picked up the word Druidical; but it was certain he picked up their supposed remains on the piece of black moor which surrounded his house. Sometimes, it was said, he found a tourist foolish enough to purchase a selection of this rubbish.

What he meant by describing himself as an official receiving pay from the Duchy of Cornwall nobody ever knew. As a Reeve (another word he had picked up somewhere) of the Manor of Lydford he believed himself to be intimately connected with the lord of that manor, who is the Prince of Wales. He knew that august personage was interested somehow in three feathers. The public-house in the neighbourhood called THE PLUME OF FEATHERS had something to do with it he was sure, though he had never seen "goosey's feathers same as they on the sign-board." Once he thought seriously of erecting three feathers above his own door, and for that purpose captured a neighbour's goose and plucked three large quills from one of its wings, accompanying his action with the bland request, "Now bide still, goosey-gander, do' ye." He could not make his three goose-quills graceful and drooping, like those upon the signboard, and

that was probably why Peter refrained from doing the Lord of Dartmoor the compliment of assuming his crest.

The village of Peter Tavy, like most spots upon Dartmoor, has its summer visitors; and these were sure, sooner or later, to make the acquaintance of Peter Tavy the man. They thought him a harmless idiot, and he reciprocated. One summer a journalist came upon the moor for his health and, desiring to combine business with pleasure, he wrote a descriptive sketch of Peter, and this was published in due course in a paper which by a curious accident reached Peter himself. The man was furious. He went about the two villages with the paper in his hand, his scanty hair bristling, his watery eyes bulging, his mouth twisted into a very ugly shape. It was a good thing the journalist had departed, for just then Peter was angry and vindictive enough for anything. Presently he met his clergyman; he made towards him, held out the paper, and, regardless of grammar, cried out, "That's me."

"He does not mention you by name," said the clergyman.

"He says the man in the iron house wi' notice-board atop. He's got down the notice-board as 'tis," spluttered Peter. "He says a ginger-headed man—that's me; face like a rabbit—well, that's me."

It was as a purveyor of manure that Peter found his level, if not a living. Probably he received financial assistance from his sister, who lived across the river at Mary Tavy. She had been formerly a lady's maid in Torquay; after more than thirty years' service her mistress had died, and had bequeathed to her a modest income, and on this she lived comfortably in retirement, crossing Tavy Cleave occasionally to visit her eccentric brother. She, too, was said to be eccentric, but that was only because she was fond of getting full value for a halfpenny. Mary Tavy was a spinster, and Peter Tavy was a bachelor. On those occasions when some ne'er-do-well attempted to annex Mary and her income, the good woman's eccentricity had revealed itself very strongly; and as for Peter, his own sister would remark, "Women never could abide he."

The Tavies always passed Christmas together. One year Peter would go across and stop with Mary for three days; the next, Mary would come across and stop with Peter for three days. Their rule on this matter was fixed; the visit never extended beyond three days, and Peter would not have dreamed of going across to Mary if it were the turn of Mary to come across to him.

Peter had a little cart and a pony to draw it. How he came by the pony nobody knew, but as it was never identified no hard questions were asked. Every year a few Dartmoor ponies are missed when the drift takes place; and at the same time certain individuals take to owning shaggy little steeds which have no past history. When a brand has been skilfully removed, one Dartmoor pony is very much like a score of others. To drive Peter into a corner over his title to the pony which pulled his shameful little cart—it was hardly better than a packing-case on wheels—would have been impossible. He had hinted that it was a present from the Prince of Wales as a slight return for services faithfully rendered; and as no one else in the Tavy district was in the habit of communicating with the lord of the manor, his statement could not easily be refuted.

With this pony and unlicensed cart Peter would convey people from time to time to the station at Mary Tavy, making a charge of eighteenpence, which was not exorbitant considering the dangers and difficulties of the road. For conveying his sister from her home to his at Christmas he made a charge of one shilling; when she expostulated, as she always did, and quoted the proverb "Charity begins at home," Peter invariably replied with another proverb, "Business is business."

Few will have forgotten the winter of 1881, when snow fell for over a week, and every road was lost and every cleave choked. Snow was lurking in sheltered nooks upon the tops of Ger Tor and the High Willhays range as late as the following May. Snow upon Dartmoor does not always mean snow elsewhere. It is possible sometimes to stand knee-deep upon the high moor and look down upon a stretch of country without a flake upon it, and so on to the sugared

and frosted hills of Exmoor; but no part of the country escaped the great fall of 1881. Every one on the moor can tell of some incident in connection with that Christmas. At the two Tavies they tell how Peter tried to drive Mary from his village to hers, how he failed in the attempt, and how both of them remained good business people to the end.

It was Mary's turn to visit Peter that year, and she arrived upon Christmas Eve, quaintly but warmly dressed, a small boy carrying her basket, which contained the articles that she deemed necessary for her visit, together with a bottle of spiced wine, some cream cakes, and a plum-pudding as big as her head. The boy said a good many uncomplimentary things about that pudding as they climbed up from the Tavy, comparing it to the Giant's Pebble higher up the cleave. When Mary raised her black-mittened hand and threatened him with chastisement, the urchin lifted out the pudding in its cloth, set it at her feet, and told her to carry it herself, as it was "enough to pinch a strong man dragging thikky gurt thing up the cleave"; so Mary had to finish the journey hugging the pudding like a baby. She was walking to save herself sixpence. Peter had offered to come for her with his pony and cart, the charge to be one shilling, payable as follows—sixpence when she got into the cart and sixpence when she got out; but she had told him that she could get a boy to carry her basket for half that amount; when he protested she reminded him that business was business.

A light sprinkle of snow had fallen, just enough to dust over the rocks and furze-bushes; but it was very cold, the clouds were low and wool-like, and there was in the air that feel of snow which animals can nearly always detect, and men who live on the moors can sometimes.

Peter and Mary spent the evening in simple style. Peter sat on one side of the fire, Mary on the other; sometimes Peter stirred to get fresh turves for the fire; sometimes Mary got up to heap the little table with good cheer and place it midway between the old-fashioned chairs. They both smoked, they both took snuff, they both drank spiced wine. Towards evening they talked of old times and became merry.

Then they talked of old people and grew sentimental, dropping tears into their hot wine. Peter got up and kissed Mary, but Mary did not care for Peter's caresses and told him so, whereupon Peter advised her to "get along home then." Mary declared she would, but changed her mind when she thought of the gloomy cleave and the Tavy in winter flood; so they went on smoking, taking snuff, and drinking spiced wine.

The next day was fine, and Peter and Mary went to chapel. Mary gave her brother a penny to put into the plate, but he put it into his pocket instead; he was always a man of business. She also gave him a bright new florin as a Christmas present. He had made her understand, when the coin was safe in his possession, that he should still demand a shilling for driving her home, and over that point they wrangled for some time. In the evening, when Peter had fallen asleep over the fire, Mary repented of her kindness and sought to regain the florin; but Peter had it hidden away safely in his boot.

When the time came for Mary to start homewards it was snowing fast, and she did not like the prospect. Although it was not much after three o'clock, the outlook was exceedingly dark; there was an unpleasant silence upon the moor, and the snowflakes were larger and falling thickly. But the pony was harnessed to the unsteady conveyance, and Peter was waiting; before Mary could utter a word of protest, he had bundled her in and they were off.

"'Twould have paid me better to bide home," said Mary.

"Do'ye sit quiet," Peter growled. Then he added, "Where's the shillun?"

"There now, doan't ye worry about the shillun," said Mary; "I'll give it ye when I'm safe and sound to home wi' no bones broke."

"Shillun be poor pay vor driving this weather," said her avaricious brother.

Now and again a light appeared from one of the cottages. The pony struggled on with its head down, while the silence seemed to grow more unearthly, and the darkness increased,

and the snow became a solid descending mass. The road between the two Tavies is not easy in winter under favourable conditions, and on that night it was to become practically impassable. When the last light of Peter Tavy the village had vanished, Peter Tavy the man had about as much idea where he was as if he had just dropped out of the moon.

"Where be'st going?" shrieked Mary, as the cart swerved violently to the right.

"Taking a short cut," explained Peter.

"Dear life!" gasped Mary, "he'm pixy-led."

"I b'ain't," said Peter; "I be driving straight vor Mary Tavy."

Had he said straight for the edge of Tavy Cleave he would have spoken the truth. The pony knew perfectly well that they were off the road, and the sensible beast would have returned to the right way had it not been for Peter, who kept pulling its head round towards the cleave. Left to itself the pony would have returned to Peter Tavy, having quite enough sense to know that it was impossible to reach the sister village on such a night. Its master, with his fatal knack of blundering, tugged at the reins with one hand and plied his whip with the other. The snow was like a wall on every side; the clouds seemed to be dissolving upon them; suddenly the silence was broken by the roaring of the Tavy below.

"Us be going to kingdom come," shrieked Mary.

"Us b'ain't," said Peter; "us be going to Mary Tavy."

The pony stopped. Peter used his whip, and the next instant the snow appeared to rush towards them, open, and swallow them up. They had struck a boulder and gone over the cleave. The body of the cart was in one spot, its wheels were in another; and wallowing in that sea of snow were Peter and Mary and the pony. The animal was the first to regain its feet, and made off at once, with the broken harness trailing behind. Mary was the next to rise, plastered over with snow from head to foot; but she was soon down again, because her legs refused to support her. Presently she heard her brother's voice. He was invisible, because he had been

thrown several feet lower, and had landed among rocks somewhat bruised and sprained; had it not been for the soft snow he would probably have been killed.

"I be broke to bits," he wailed.

"So be I," cried Mary; "so be the cart."

"Be the cart broke?" said Peter; and when Mary had replied it was only fit for firewood (it had not been fit for much else before the accident), he went on, " 'Twill cost ye a lot o' money to buy me a new one."

"Buy ye a new one? The man be dafty!" screamed Mary.

" 'Twas taking yew home what broke it," Peter explained.

"Call this taking me home?" Mary shouted.

"I done my best," said Peter; " 'twas your weight what sent it over. There'll be the cart, and the harness, and doctor's bill; 'twill cost ye a heap o' money."

"Dear life, hear the man talk!" said Mary, appealing to the snow which was piled upon her ample form.

"Maybe there'll be funeral expenses," said Peter lugubriously; "I be hurt dreadful."

"Yew wun't want the cart then," his sister muttered; "and I'll have the pony."

"Where be the pony?" Peter demanded.

"Gone home likely; got more sense than we," said Mary. "Why doan't ye get up, Peter?"

"Get up wi' my two legs broke!" Peter replied in disgust.

"Dear life, man, get up!" Mary went on, with real alarm. "If us doan't get up soon us'll be stone dead carpses when us gets home."

"I'll try, Mary, I'll try," said Peter.

"Come up here, Peter; there be a lew spot over agin them rocks," said Mary.

"There be a lew spot down here," Peter answered; " 'tis easier vor yew to roll down than vor me to climb up."

When that question had been argued, Mary went down; that is to say, she groped and grovelled through the snow, half-rolling, half-sliding, until she reached the sheltered spot to which Peter had dragged himself. It was a small cleft,

a chimney, mountaineers would have called it, in the centre of a rock-mass which made a small tor on the side of the cleave. Normally, this chimney acted as a drain for the rock-basin above, but it was then frozen up and dry. Peter was right at the back, huddled up as he could never have been had any bones been broken. When Mary appeared he dragged her in; she was almost too stout to pass inside, but as he placed her she made an excellent protection for him against the storm. Mary realised this, and suggested they should change places; but Peter pointed out that in his shattered condition any movement might easily prove fatal.

Presently Mary began to cry, realising the gravity of their position. The snow was descending more thickly than ever, drifting up the side of the cleave and choking the entrance to their cleft. Fortunately the night was not very cold, and they were both warmly clad, while the snow which was threatening to bury them was itself a protection. Help could not possibly reach them while the night lasted; no one would know what had befallen them, and they were unable to walk. When Mary began to cry Peter abused her, until his thoughts began also to trouble him.

"Think they'll put what's on my notice-board on my tombstone?" he enquired.

"Now doan't ye talk about tombstoanes, doan't ye now," implored Mary tearfully.

"Business is business," said Peter. "I told 'em to give me a gurt big tombstone, and to put upon him, *Peter Tavy, Clock-maker, Photographer, Dealer in Antiquities, Dartmoor Guide, Reeve of the Manor of Lydford, Purveyor of Manure, and et cetera.*"

"Doan't ye worry about it; they'll put it all down," said Mary.

"Us'll be buried together, same afternoon, half-past two likely," Peter went on.

"Doan't ye talk about funerals and tombstoanes," Mary implored. "Talk about spicy wine, and goosey fair, and them wooden horses what go round and round, and hurdy-gurdy music; talk about they, Peter."

"It ain't the time," said Peter bitterly.

A long dreary period of silence followed. Peter Tavy the village and Mary Tavy its sister were completely snowed up; and in the cleave of the river which divided the parishes Peter Tavy the man was snowed up with Mary Tavy his sister. They were miserably cold and drowsy. The snow was piled up in front of the chimney like a wall; there was hardly room for Mary to move, and Peter kept on groaning. At length he roused himself to remark: "Yew owes me a shillun."

"What would I owe ye a shillun vor?" said Mary sharply, wide-awake immediately at any suggestion of parting with money.

"Vor the drive," said Peter.

"I was to give ye a shillun vor taking me home, not vor breaking me bones and leaving me to perish in Tavy Cleave," said Mary. "Yew ain't earned the shillun, and I doan't see how yew'm going to."

"Yew owes me a shillun," repeated her brother doggedly. "I done my best to tak' ye home, and there was naught in your agreement wi' me about accidents. I never contracted to tak' ye home neither."

"Yew never promised to starve me wi' ice and snow on Tavy Cleave neither," replied Mary.

"I didn't promise nothing. I meant to tak' ye home, reasonable wear and tear excepted; this here is reasonable wear and tear. Yew promised to give me a shillun."

"When yew put me down," added Mary.

"Yew wur put down," said Peter.

"Not to my door,"

"That warn't my fault," said Peter. "'Twas your worriting what done it; if yew hadn't worrited I'd have put ye out to Mary Tavy. Yew worrited and upset the cart, and now we'm dying."

"I b'ain't dying," said Mary stoutly.

"I be," said Peter drearily. "I be all cold and nohow inside. I be a going to die; I'd like to die wi' that shillun in my pocket."

"Doan't ye go on about it, Peter. If yew'm dying yew'll soon be in a place where yew wun't want shilluns."

"While I be here I want 'en," said Peter. "Yew'll be fearful sorry when yew see me lying a cold carpse wi'out a shillun in my pocket."

"Give over, can't ye," cried Mary. "You'll be giving me the creepies. If yew wur to turn carpsy I wouldn't bide wi' ye."

There was no reply. Silence fell again, and the only sound was the moaning of the wind and the roaring of the Tavy; the snow went on falling and drifting. Another hour passed, and then Mary shook off her drowsiness, and called timidly, "Peter." There was no answer; she could see nothing; her fear returned and she shuddered. "Peter," she called again; there was still no reply. Mary pressed her stout figure forward and reached out fearfully; she heard a groan. "Ah, doan't ye die," she implored; "wait till us gets out o' this. What's the matter, Peter?"

"Yew owes me a shillun," whispered a voice.

"I doan't owe it, Peter, I doan't," cried Mary pitifully. "If yew had drove me across the Tavy I'd have paid ye, I would; but us be still in the parish of Peter Tavy——"

She was interrupted by another and a deeper groan. "Be yew that bad?" she asked earnestly.

"I be like an old clock past mending," Peter answered, "like old George Routleigh in Lydford churchyard. My mainspring be broke; I be about to depart this life, December the twenty-seventh, eighteen hundred and eighty-one, aged fifty-eight, in hopes of being thoroughly cleaned and repaired and set a going in the world to come."

"Can I du anything vor ye, Peter?" asked Mary gently.

"Yew can give me the shillun yew owes me," replied Peter.

"'Tis hard of ye to want a shillun if yew'm dying."

"Business is business," Peter moaned.

Fumbling in the little black bag she carried beneath her skirt, Mary produced a coin and held it out, saying sadly: "Here 'tis, Peter; I doan't want to give it ye, but if 'twill make yew die happy, I must."

With singular agility Peter reached out his hand, and after groping a little in the darkness secured the precious

coin. He felt it, he bit it, and he asked with suspicion: "How be I to know 'tis a shillun? He tastes like a half-penny."

"I know 'tis a shillun; I ain't got no halfpence," Mary answered.

Peter's groans ceased from that moment; he pocketed the coin and chuckled.

"I be a lot better," he said; "my legs b'ain't quite broke, I reckon, and I ain't so cold inside, neither."

Mary's reply was too eccentric to mention.

So soon as it was day a party of villagers set out from Peter Tavy well supplied with blankets and stimulants; Peter and Mary were not the only ones missing that fateful morning. The pony had returned to its stable the evening before, and had been seen by the local constable trailing its broken harness past the beer-house. An attempt had been made to find the couple then, but their tracks were completely hidden. Snow was still descending as the relief party waded through the drifts upon the edge of the cleave. The moor had disappeared during the night, and a strange region of white mountains had risen in its stead. The searchers worked their way on, with a hopeless feeling that they were only wasting their time, when they thought they heard a whistle. They stopped and argued the matter like the three jolly huntsmen; one said it was a man, another said it was a bird, and another it was the wind. They were all wrong; it was a woman. Out of the centre of a huge white mass down the cleave appeared a black scarf tied to the end of an umbrella.

Peter and Mary were rescued, not without difficulty, because the snow was four feet in depth on the side of the cleave, and were conveyed in due course to their respective villages. Being a hardy couple they were little the worse for their adventure, although Peter posed as an invalid to the end of his days, and sought parish relief in consequence; that was simply a matter of business.

So soon as the roads were passable and he was able to walk, Peter tramped across to Mary Tavy, to pay his sister a friendly, and a business, visit. "There be ten shilluns

yew owes vor breaking my cart and harness," he explained. "When be yew a going to pay?"

"Never," replied Mary decidedly.

"Then I'll tak' ye into court," said Peter.

THE CHINK AND THE CHILD[1]

By Thomas Burke

IT is a tale of love and lovers that they tell in the low-lit Causeway that slinks from West India Dock Road to the dark waste of waters beyond. In Pennyfields, too, you may hear it; and I do not doubt that it is told in far-away Tai-Ping, in Singapore, in Tokio, in Shanghai, and those other gay-lamped haunts of wonder whither the wandering people of Limehouse go and whence they return so casually. It is a tale for tears, and should you hear it in the lilied tongue of the yellow men, it would awaken in you all your pity. In our bald speech it must, unhappily, lose its essential fragrance, that quality that will lift an affair of squalor into the loftier spheres of passion and imagination, beauty and sorrow. It will sound unconvincing, a little . . . you know . . . the kind of thing that is best forgotten. Perhaps . . .

But listen.

It is Battling Burrows, the lightning welterweight of Shadwell, the box o' tricks, the Tetrarch of the ring, who enters first. Battling Burrows, the pride of Ratcliff, Poplar and Limehouse, and the despair of his manager and backers. For he loved wine, woman and song; and the boxing world held that he couldn't last long on that. There was any amount of money in him for his parasites if only the damned women could be cut out; but again and again would he disappear from his training quarters on the eve of a big fight, to consort with Molly and Dolly, and to drink other things than barley-water and lemon-juice. Where-

[1] From "Limehouse Nights." By permission of Robert M. McBride and Company, and Thomas Burke.

fore Chuck Lightfoot, his manager, forced him to fight on any and every occasion while he was good and a money-maker; for at any moment the collapse might come, and Chuck would be called upon by his creditors to strip off that "shirt" which at every contest he laid upon his man.

Battling was of a type that is too common in the eastern districts of London; a type that upsets all accepted classifications. He wouldn't be classed. He was a curious mixture of athleticism and degeneracy. He could run like a deer, leap like a greyhound, fight like a machine, and drink like a suction-hose. He was a bully; he had the courage of the high hero. He was an open-air sport; he had the vices of a French decadent.

It was one of his love adventures that properly begins this tale; for the girl had come to Battling one night with a recital of terrible happenings, of an angered parent, of a slammed door. . . . In her arms was a bundle of white rags. Now Battling, like so many sensualists, was also a sentimentalist. He took that bundle of white rags; he paid the girl money to get into the country; and the bundle of white rags had existed in and about his domicile in Pekin Street, Limehouse, for some eleven years. Her position was nondescript; to the casual observer it would seem that she was Battling's relief punch-ball—an unpleasant post for any human creature to occupy, especially if you are a little girl of twelve, and the place be the one-room household of the lightning welter-weight. When Battling was cross with his manager . . . well, it is indefensible to strike your manager or to throw chairs at him, if he is a good manager; but to use a dog-whip on a small child is permissible and quite as satisfying; at least, he found it so. On these occasions, then, when very cross with his sparring partners, or over-flushed with victory and juice of the grape, he would flog Lucy. But he was reputed by the boys to be a good fellow. He only whipped the child when he was drunk; and he was only drunk for eight months of the year.

For just over twelve years this bruised little body had crept about Poplar and Limehouse. Always the white

face was scarred with red, or black-furrowed with tears; always in her steps and in her look was expectation of dread things. Night after night her sleep was broken by the cheerful Battling's brute voice and violent hands; and terrible were the lessons which life taught her in those few years. Yet, for all the starved face and the transfixed air, there was a lurking beauty about her, a something that called you in the soft curve of her cheek that cried for kisses and was fed with blows, and in the splendid mournfulness that grew in eyes and lips. The brown hair chimed against the pale face, like the rounding of a verse. The blue cotton frock and the broken shoes could not break the loveliness of her slender figure or the shy grace of her movements as she flitted about the squalid alleys of the docks; though in all that region of wasted life and toil and decay, there was not one that noticed her, until . . .

Now there lived in Chinatown, in one lousy room over Mr. Tai Fu's store in Pennyfields, a wandering yellow man, named Cheng Huan. Cheng Huan was a poet. He did not realise it. He had never been able to understand why he was unpopular; and he died without knowing. But a poet he was, tinged with the materialism of his race, and in his poor listening heart strange echoes would awake of which he himself was barely conscious. He regarded things differently from other sailors; he felt things more passionately, and things which they felt not at all; so he lived alone instead of at one of the lodging-houses. Every evening he would sit at his window and watch the street. Then, a little later, he would take a jolt of opium at the place at the corner of Formosa Street.

He had come to London by devious ways. He had loafed on the Bund at Shanghai. The fateful intervention of a crimp had landed him on a boat. He got to Cardiff, and sojourned in its Chinatown; thence to Liverpool, to Glasgow; thence, by a ticket from the Asiatics' Aid Society, to Limehouse, where he remained for two reasons —because it cost him nothing to live there, and because he was too lazy to find a boat to take him back to Shanghai.

So he would lounge and smoke cheap cigarettes, and sit at his window, from which point he had many times observed the lyrical Lucy. He noticed her casually. Another day, he observed her, not casually. Later, he looked long at her; later still, he began to watch for her and for that strangely provocative something about the toss of the head and the hang of the little blue skirt as it coyly kissed her knee.

Then that beauty which all Limehouse had missed smote Cheng. Straight to his heart it went, and cried itself into his very blood. Thereafter the spirit of poetry broke her blossoms all about his odorous chamber. Nothing was the same. Pennyfields became a happy-lanterned street, and the monotonous fiddle in the house opposite was the music of his fathers. Bits of old song floated through his mind: little sweet verses of Le Tai-pih, murmuring of plum blossom, ricefield and stream. Day by day he would moon at his window, or shuffle about the streets, lighting to a flame when Lucy would pass and gravely return his quiet regard; and night after night, too, he would dream of a pale, lily-lovely child.

And now the Fates moved swiftly various pieces on their sinister board, and all that followed happened with a speed and precision that showed direction from higher ways.

It was Wednesday night in Limehouse, and for once clear of mist. Out of the coloured darkness of the Causeway stole the muffled wail of reed instruments, and, though every window was closely shuttered, between the joints shot jets of light and stealthy voices and you could hear the whisper of slippered feet, and the stuttering steps of the satyr and the sadist. It was to the café in the middle of the Causeway, lit by the pallid blue light that is the symbol of China throughout the world, that Cheng Huan came, to take a dish of noodle and some tea. Thence he moved to another house whose stairs ran straight to the street, and above whose doorway a lamp glowed like an evil eye. At this establishment he mostly took his pipe of "chandu" and a brief chat with the keeper of the house, for, although not popular, and very silent, he liked some-

times to be in the presence of his compatriots. Like a figure of a shadowgraph he slid through the door and up the stairs.

The chamber he entered was a bit of the Orient squatting at the portals of the West. It was a well-kept place where one might play a game of fan-tan, or take a shot or so of *li-un,* or purchase other varieties of Oriental delight. It was sunk in a purple dusk, though here and there a lantern stung the glooms. Low couches lay around the walls, and strange men decorated them: Chinese, Japs, Malays, Lascars, with one or two white girls; and sleek, noiseless attendants swam from couch to couch. Away in the far corner sprawled a lank figure in brown shirting, its nerveless fingers curled about the stem of a spent pipe. On one of the lounges a scorbutic nigger sat with a Jewess from Shadwell. Squatting on a table in the centre, beneath one of the lanterns, was a musician with a reed, blinking upon the company like a sly cat, and making his melody of six repeated notes.

The atmosphere churned. The dirt of years, tobacco of many growings, opium, betel nut, and moist flesh allied themselves in one grand assault against the nostrils.

As Cheng brooded on his insect-ridden cushion, of a sudden the lantern above the musician was caught by the ribbon of his reed. It danced and flung a hazy radiance on a divan in the shadow. He saw—started—half rose. His heart galloped, and the blood pounded in his quiet veins. Then he dropped again, crouched, and stared.

O lily-flowers and plum blossoms! O silver streams and dim-starred skies! O wine and roses, song and laughter! For there, kneeling on a mass of rugs, mazed and big-eyed, but understanding, was Lucy . . . his Lucy . . . his little maid. Through the dusk she must have felt his intent gaze upon her; for he crouched there, fascinated, staring into the now obscured corner where she knelt.

But the sickness which momentarily gripped him on finding in this place his snowy-breasted pearl passed and gave place to great joy. She was here; he would talk with her. Little English he had, but simple words, those with few

gutturals, he had managed to pick up; so he rose, the masterful lover, and, with feline movements, crossed the nightmare chamber to claim his own.

If you wonder how Lucy came to be in this bagnio, the explanation is simple. Battling was in training. He had flogged her that day before starting work; he had then had a few brandies—not many; some eighteen or nineteen—and had locked the door of his room and taken the key. Lucy was, therefore, homeless, and a girl somewhat older than Lucy, so old and so wise, as girls are in that region, saw in her a possible source of revenue. So there they were, and to them appeared Cheng.

From what horrors he saved her that night cannot be told, for her ways were too audaciously childish to hold her long from harm in such a place. What he brought to her was love and death.

For he sat by her. He looked at her—reverently yet passionately. He touched her—wistfully yet eagerly. He locked a finger in her wondrous hair. She did not start away; she did not tremble. She knew well what she had to be afraid of in that place; but she was not afraid of Cheng. She pierced the mephitic gloom and scanned his face. No, she was not afraid. His yellow hands, his yellow face, his smooth black hair . . . well, he was the first thing that had ever spoken soft words to her; the first thing that had ever laid a hand upon her that was not brutal; the first thing that had deferred in manner towards her as though she, too, had a right to live. She knew his words were sweet, though she did not understand them. Nor can they be set down. Half that he spoke was in village Chinese; the rest in a mangling of English which no distorted spelling could possibly reproduce.

But he drew her back against the cushions and asked her name, and she told him; and he inquired her age, and she told him; and he had then two beautiful words which came easily to his tongue. He repeated them again and again:

"Lucia . . . li'l Lucia. . . . Twelve. . . . Twelve." Musical phrases they were, dropping from his lips, and to the

child who heard her name pronounced so lovingly, they were the last heights of melody. She clung to him, and he to her. She held his strong arm in both of hers as they crouched on the divan, and nestled her cheek against his coat.

Well . . . he took her home to his wretched room.

"Li'l Lucia, come-a-home . . . Lucia."

His heart was on fire. As they slipped out of the noisomeness into the night air and crossed the West India Dock Road into Pennyfields, they passed unnoticed. It was late, for one thing, and for another . . . well, nobody cared particularly. His blood rang with soft music and the solemnity of drums, for surely he had found now what for many years he had sought—his world's one flower. Wanderer he was, from Tuan-tsen to Shanghai, Shanghai to Glasgow . . . Cardiff . . . Liverpool . . . London. He had dreamed often of the women of his native land; perchance one of them should be his flower. Women, indeed, there had been. Swatow . . . he had recollections of certain rose-winged hours in coast cities. At many places to which chance had led him a little bird had perched itself upon his heart, but so lightly and for so brief a while as hardly to be felt. But now—now he had found her in this alabaster Cockney child. So that he was glad and had great joy of himself and the blue and silver night, and the harsh flares of the Poplar Hippodrome.

You will observe that he had claimed her, but had not asked himself whether she were of an age for love. The white perfection of the child had captivated every sense. It may be that he forgot that he was in London and not in Tuan-tsen. It may be that he did not care. Of that nothing can be told. All that is known is that his love was a pure and holy thing. Of that we may be sure; for his worst enemies have said it.

Slowly, softly they mounted the stairs to his room, and with almost an obeisance he entered and drew her in. A bank of cloud raced to the east and a full moon thrust a sharp sword of light upon them. Silence lay over all Pennyfields. With a bird-like movement, she looked up at him

—her face alight, her tiny hands upon his coat—clinging, wondering, trusting. He took her hand and kissed it; repeated the kiss upon her cheek and lip and little bosom, twining his fingers in her hair. Docilely, and echoing the smile of his lemon lips in a way that thrilled him almost to laughter, she returned his kisses impetuously, gladly.

He clasped the nestling to him. Bruised, tearful, with the love of life almost thrashed out of her, she had fluttered to him out of the evil night.

"O li'l Lucia!" And he put soft hands upon her, and smoothed her and crooned over her many gracious things in his flowered speech. So they stood in the moonlight while she told him the story of her father, of her beatings, and starvings, and unhappiness.

"O li'l Lucia. . . . White Blossom. . . . Twelve. . . . Twelve years old!"

As he spoke, the clock above the Milwall Docks shot twelve crashing notes across the night. When the last echo died, he moved to a cupboard, and from it he drew strange things . . . formless masses of blue and gold, magical things of silk, and a vessel that was surely Aladdin's lamp, and a box of spices. He took these robes, and, with tender, reverent fingers, removed from his White Blossom the besmirched rags that covered her, and robed her again, and led her then to the heap of stuff that was his bed, and bestowed her safely.

For himself, he squatted on the floor before her, holding one grubby little hand. There he crouched all night, under the lyric moon, sleepless, watchful; and sweet content was his. He had fallen into an uncomfortable posture, and his muscles ached intolerably. But she slept, and he dared not move nor release her hand lest he should awaken her. Weary and trustful, she slept, knowing that the yellow man was kind and that she might sleep with no fear of a steel hand smashing the delicate structure of her dreams.

In the morning, when she awoke, still wearing her blue and yellow silk, she gave a cry of amazement. Cheng had been about. Many times had be glided up and down the two flights of stairs, and now at last his room was pre-

pared for his princess. It was swept and garnished, and was an apartment worthy a maid who is loved by a poet-prince. There was a bead curtain. There were muslins of pink and white. There were four bowls of flowers, clean, clear flowers to gladden the White Blossom and set off her sharp beauty. And there was a bowl of water, and a sweet lotion for the bruise on her cheek.

When she had risen, her prince ministered to her with rice and egg and tea. Cleansed and robed and calm, she sat before him, perched on the edge of many cushions as on a throne, with all the grace of the child princess in the story. She was a poem. The beauty hidden by neglect and fatigue shone out now more clearly and vividly, and from the head sunning over with curls to the small white feet, now bathed and sandalled, she seemed the living interpretation of a Chinese lyric. And she was his; her sweet self and her prattle, and her birdlike ways were all his own.

Oh, beautifully they loved. For two days he held her. Soft caresses from his yellow hands and long, devout kisses were all their demonstration. Each night he would tend her, as might mother to child; and each night he watched and sometimes slumbered at the foot of her couch.

But now there were those that ran to Battling at his training quarters across the river, with the news that his child had gone with a Chink—a yellow man. And Battling was angry. He discovered parental rights. He discovered indignation. A yellow man after his kid! He'd learn him. Battling did not like men who were not born in the same great country as himself. Particularly he disliked yellow men. His birth and education in Shadwell had taught him that of all creeping things that creep upon the earth the most insidious is the Oriental in the West. And a yellow man and a child. It was . . . as you might say . . . so . . . kind of . . . well, wasn't it? He bellowed that it was "unnacherel." The yeller man would go through it. Yeller! It was his supreme condemnation, his final epithet for all conduct of which he disapproved.

There was no doubt that he was extremely annoyed. He

went to the Blue Lantern, in what was once Ratcliff Highway, and thumped the bar, and made all his world agree with him. And when they agreed with him he got angrier still. So that when, a few hours later, he climbed through the ropes at the Netherlands to meet Bud Tuffit for ten rounds, it was Bud's fight all the time, and to that bright boy's astonishment he was the victor on points at the end of the ten. Battling slouched out of the ring, still more determined to let the Chink have it where the chicken had the axe. He left the house with two pals and a black man, and a number of really inspired curses from his manager.

On the evening of the third day, then, Cheng slipped sleepily down the stairs to procure more flowers and more rice. The genial Ho Ling, who keeps the Canton store, held him in talk some little while, and he was gone from his room perhaps half-an-hour. Then he glided back, and climbed with happy feet the forty stairs to his temple of wonder.

With a push of a finger he opened the door, and the blood froze on his cheek, the flowers fell from him. The temple was empty and desolate; White Blossom was gone. The muslin hangings were torn down and trampled underfoot. The flowers had been flung from their bowls about the floor, and the bowls lay in fifty fragments. The joss was smashed. The cupboard had been opened. Rice was scattered here and there. The little straight bed had been jumped upon by brute feet. Everything that could be smashed or violated had been so treated, and—horror of all—the blue and yellow silk robe had been rent in pieces, tied in grotesque knots, and slung derisively about the table legs.

I pray devoutly that you may never suffer what Cheng Huan suffered in that moment. The pangs of death, with no dying; the sickness of the soul which longs to escape and cannot; the imprisoned animal within the breast which struggles madly for a voice and finds none; all the agonies of all the ages—the agonies of every abandoned lover and lost woman, past and to come—all these things were his in that moment.

Then he found voice and gave a great cry, and men from below came up to him; and they told him how the man who boxed had been there with a black man; how he had torn the robes from his child, and dragged her down the stairs by her hair; and how he had shouted aloud for Cheng and had vowed to return and deal separately with him.

Now a terrible dignity came to Cheng, and the soul of his great fathers swept over him. He closed the door against them, and fell prostrate over what had been the resting-place of White Blossom. Those without heard strange sounds as of an animal in its last pains; and it was even so. Cheng was dying. The sacrament of his high and holy passion had been profaned; the last sanctuary of the Oriental—his soul dignity—had been assaulted. The love robes had been torn to ribbons; the veil of his temple cut down. Life was no longer possible; and life without his little lady, his White Blossom, was no longer desirable.

Prostrate he lay for the space of some five minutes. Then, in his face all the pride of accepted destiny, he arose. He drew together the little bed. With reverent hands he took the pieces of blue and yellow silk, kissing them and fondling them and placing them about the pillow. Silently he gathered up the flowers, and the broken earthenware, and burnt some prayer papers and prepared himself for death.

Now it is the custom among those of the sect of Cheng that the dying shall present love-gifts to their enemies; and when he had set all in order, he gathered his brown canvas coat about him, stole from the house, and set out to find Battling Burrows, bearing under the coat his love-gift to Battling. White Blossom he had no hope of finding. He had heard of Burrows many times; and he judged that, now that she was taken from him, never again would he hold those hands or touch that laughing hair. Nor, if he did, could it change things from what they were. Nothing that was not a dog could live in the face of this sacrilege.

As he came before the house in Pekin Street, where Battling lived, he murmured gracious prayers. Fortunately, it

was a night of thick river mist, and through the enveloping velvet none could observe or challenge him. The main door was open, as are all doors in this district. He writhed across the step, and through to the back room, where again the door yielded to a touch.

Darkness. Darkness and silence, and a sense of frightful things. He peered through it. Then he fumbled under his jacket—found a match—struck it. An inch of candle stood on the mantelshelf. He lit it. He looked round. No sign of Burrows, but . . . Almost before he looked he knew what awaited him. But the sense of finality had kindly stunned him; he could suffer nothing more.

On the table lay a dog-whip. In the corner a belt had been flung. Half across the greasy couch lay White Blossom. A few rags of clothing were about her pale, slim body; her hair hung limp as her limbs; her eyes were closed. As Cheng drew nearer and saw the savage red rails that ran across and across the beloved body, he could not scream—he could not think. He dropped beside the couch. He laid gentle hands upon her, and called soft names. She was warm to the touch. The pulse was still.

Softly, oh, so softly, he bent over the little frame that had enclosed his friend-spirit, and his light kisses fell all about her. Then, with the undirected movements of a sleep-walker, he bestowed the rags decently about her, clasped her in strong arms, and crept silently into the night.

From Pekin Street to Pennyfields it is but a turn or two, and again he passed unobserved as he bore his tired bird back to her nest. He laid her upon the bed, and covered the lily limbs with the blue and yellow silks and strewed upon her a few of the trampled flowers. Then, with more kisses and prayers, he crouched beside her.

So, in the ghastly Limehouse morning, they were found—the dead child, and the Chink, kneeling beside her, with a sharp knife gripped in a vise-like hand, its blade far between his ribs.

Meantime, having vented his wrath on his prodigal daughter, Battling, still cross, had returned to the Blue Lantern, and there he stayed with a brandy tumbler in his fist, for-

getful of an appointment at Premierland, whereby he should have been in the ring at ten o'clock sharp. For the space of an hour Chuck Lightfoot was going blasphemously to and fro in Poplar, seeking Battling and not finding him, and murmuring, in tearful tones: "Battling—you dammanblasted Battling—where are yeh?"

His opponent was in his corner sure enough, but there was no fight. For Battling lurched from the Blue Lantern to Pekin Street. He lurched into his happy home, and he cursed Lucy, and called for her. And finding no matches, he lurched to where he knew the couch should be, and flopped heavily down.

Now it is a peculiarity of the reptile tribe that its members are impatient of being flopped on without warning. So, when Battling flopped, eighteen inches of writhing gristle upreared itself on the couch, and got home on him as Bud Tuffit had done the night before—one to the ear, one to the throat, and another to the forearm.

Battling went down and out.

And he, too, was found in the morning, with Cheng Huan's love-gift coiled about his neck.

MONSIEUR FÉLICITÉ

By Hugh Walpole

OF all French towns Villeton is least touched by modern influences; it lies (like a pearl-grey shell) between the arms of a brown round-backed hill—over it the sky is, during most of the year, a burning blue, and out of it rise, like hands stretched out to bless, the two white towers of the cathedral.

It had remained altogether mediæval in spite of its railway, for its tower and its cathedral have kept it so; the tower is the "Tour du Prince Noir," but nobody knows why it is called that—it is grey and tumbling and stands on a little green hill where daffodils and snowdrops blow white and yellow in the spring.

A steep hill and every little crooked street in the town leads up to the old church. It fills one side of the market-place and from its great carved door and its myriad-coloured windows looks down on all the busy clattering life of the place.

Monsieur Félicité lived on the other side of the square opposite the cathedral.

If you were to go and stay at Villeton nowadays—in the summer it is very hot, but in the spring there is no place pleasanter—you will hear them refer to him continually. He ruled like a little king there in his day, and yet he was one of the gentlest and mildest of men, and never quarrelled with anybody except on the one great occasion about which I am going to tell you.

There are pictures of him scattered about, and one rather fine painting in the big *salle* of the "Soleil Rouge"—much the best inn in the place. The work is amateurishly done,

but something of the vitality and humour of the man is caught by it. He is wearing the faded brown tail-coat that he always had, light at the waist, with round shiny buttons at the back; brown velveteen trousers, very wide and baggy; and a great brown bow of a tie falling over his white frilled shirt. But the face is irresistible. I never knew him personally, but I have sat gazing at that picture for I'm ashamed to say how long, loving those brown eyes twinkling with good humour and that fine strong mouth just turning up at the corners into a little ghost of a smile. His hair was white when the picture was painted—curly and cropped close to his head.

He was short and a little stout and he always carried a black silver-topped stick with which he tapped, like a cheerful robin, about the streets. Give him a soft hat, large and shady, but of no particular shape, and you have him complete—Monsieur Bonaparte Félicité!

I know nothing about his earlier history—it is better to leave that alone; to think of him as young and stern and perhaps impetuous and callous is to think of some one else altogether. For the town he is always that little round merry figure with his white hair and brown tie—they refuse to believe that he was ever anything else. His rooms are still very much as he left them—dark and low-roofed with a wide, open fireplace with little brown tiles and a faded green carpet sprinkled with red roses. There used to be an ancient brown cabinet in the corner, and the old piano was against the wall by the door—those things have gone.

He was always to be seen drinking his tea in the window as the evening began to enfold the little town and the shadows crept like ghosts across the market-place. His lamp would burn like a beacon there as he watched the stars come out one by one over the towers of the cathedral. People would wish him a "*Bonsoir, monsieu'*," as they passed, but he had no relations of his own; there was only Madame Bette, who looked after him, and, of course, his great friend André.

It is about Monsieur André and the quarrel that he had with Monsieur Félicité that I am going to tell you, for it is

always the story that they will tell you first about him. Monsieur André was an enormous giant of a man. There is still a rough little sketch of him at the house of Monsieur Raguilleau, the notary, and it is, they say, a good likeness. He was as broad as he was tall, and extraordinary stories were told of his strength, but his eyes were kind and his mouth smiled. He served in '70 against the Prussians, and to the intimate circle at the "Soleil Rouge" in the evening he would tell the most wonderful stories about those days and the things that he had seen and done.

He was very proud and curiously shy unless you knew him well, and he was a very difficult man to know. He was hopelessly unpractical and had no common sense at all, and his rooms were always dreadfully untidy and his clothes uncared for until he became intimate with Monsieur Félicité. He used to forget his meals and go wandering out into the fields and woods, cutting off the heads of the poppies as though they had been so many Prussians and muttering to himself all the time.

He was a very affectionate man, but before he met Monsieur Félicité he had no one to whom to give it all save a kind of mongrel dog called "Boule de Suif" because of its round "podgy" shape, like the poor lady in Maupassant's story. The dog was always with him, and an unpleasant kind of dog it was to every one except its master. Then he met Monsieur Félicité and the dog had to take second place.

Their meeting was under the wide arch of Madame Permon's door in the Rue des Ecoliers in a shower of rain, and afterwards they shared an umbrella. Monsieur Félicité was always charming to every one, but, on this occasion, he had to do most of the talking, and Monsieur André came in, every now and again, with a *"Ha!"* or a *"Mais, oui!"* and at times a surly *"Mais, non!"* from the back of his throat. It must have been amusing to watch them because Monsieur André refused to hold the umbrella and Monsieur Félicité had to stand on the edge of his toes to keep it high enough. Outside Monsieur Félicité's door they stopped, and for a moment nothing was said; then suddenly Mon-

sieur André shot out his hand and gripped the handle of the umbrella and Monsieur Félicité's fingers so fiercely that the little man winced.

Then the giant turned hurriedly away and, with "Boule de Suif" at his heels, sped round the corner.

After that, Monsieur André was often to be seen in the square; sometimes he would walk round and round, his head down, his arms folded behind his back, his dog at his heels, and not a word would he say to any one. His visit had, apparently, no relation at all to Monsieur Félicité, for he never went near his door nor did he glance up at his window. Once the little man watched him, and at last came out of his house, intending to speak to him, but Monsieur André was round the corner in a moment.

At last he was caught leaning against the wall looking vacantly into space, and, shamefaced and reluctant, he was made to climb the stairs to the room with the green carpet and the brown cabinet. He stared in amazement at the neatness of it and sat down suddenly, without a word—like the Queen of Sheba, "there was no more spirit in him." Monsieur Félicité made tea and talked all the time in the charming, graceful way that he had. He was so humble and tender-hearted a little man that he flung a beautiful light over everything. "Boule de Suif" loved him at once—as indeed did all children and animals—and soon Monsieur André, being nothing more than a child himself, followed his dog's example.

Then Monsieur André began to talk, and soon his stories were pouring out in a great, tempestuous stream. I don't think that Monsieur Félicité believed it all, even from the first, and, after a time, he misdoubted it altogether, but he would sit in the corner by the fire, smiling, his little hands folded, and every now and again a *"Mais, oui!"* or *"Certainement!"* or *"Mon Dieu!"* shot out like little bullets. I think he took the stories as part of his friend and never minded their impossibility. Sometimes Monsieur André himself wondered whether some especially daring statement could really be true, and he would pause for a moment and look sharply at his friend—but, after an instant's hesitation,

conviction would be back again and with a satisfied *"Moi j'étais là!"* he would go on again.

Soon they were inseparable, and all the town knew that it was so. There must have been some jealousy about it, for Monsieur Félicité was the idol of the town and the others did not see why Monsieur André should appropriate him so entirely. They liked the man well enough, and they treated his stories respectfully, although they laughed behind his back. He certainly had the grand manner, and he piled Pelion on Ossa with a gesture and a gusto that covered a multitude of untruths. Besides, after all, the people of Villeton were not so very truthful themselves, and a story was always to be saved by its interest rather than its accuracy.

Once a week, on Friday evenings, they went down to the Rue Soleil and smoked with their friends. Monsieur Félicité had never joined these assemblies before; he had gone out very little in the evening, but now Monsieur André brought him with him and of course he was given the warmest of welcomes. Those Friday gatherings still go on and you can see the very corner in which Monsieur Félicité used to sit—at the back, to the right, under the painting of Monsieur Soul, fat and red-faced, onetime Mayor of Villeton. The room is charming with its low smoke-stained roof, its oak panelling and red-brick floor. An old oak partition rising half-way to the ceiling cuts the room into two, and it was behind this, in the most delicious and intimate privacy, round a large and shining table, that they sat.

There were ten of them at that time—the most celebrated being young Jacques Paturôt, poet and pastry-cook; Monsieur Marteau, the bookseller, and Monsieur Raguilleau, the notary, who was responsible for most of the quarrelling.

Monsieur André sat on his friend's right with "Boule de Suif" at his feet and an enormous pipe in his mouth. He was generally silent until he considered that the crucial moment had come, then he would cough, lean forward over the table and begin. The rest of the company listened somewhat phlegmatically, but they never interrupted, and murmured at times to show that they were attending. Then,

his story over, Monsieur André would sink back into his seat again and listen to other people.

After a while Monsieur Félicité began to be worried. He had, by this time, a great affection for his friend and he was very jealous of everything that concerned his reputation. Once he had overheard Monsieur Permon and Monsieur Raguilleau laughing at the stories; they had mocked at Monsieur André in a way that hurt the little man dreadfully. He went back to his room and pondered over the matter.

He knew that, in the future, every story that his friend told would torture him; those nights at the club, hitherto so gay and delightful, would now be impossible. He could not sit there and listen to his friend and know that those others were laughing to themselves. He had not minded the stories when they were told in his room with no other person there—then it was for himself alone to judge, and he had loved the great rambling boaster far too dearly to judge him severely. It had, indeed, puzzled him a little. Monsieur André, on all other occasions, was modest and retiring, and indeed agreed with his friend in any proposal that was made, but, so soon as '70 was mentioned, the head was raised, the chest swelled, and *"Moi, j'étais là!"* came bursting forth—for a moment cannons roared, corpses lay strewn about the dark little streets of Villeton, and Monsieur André was a hero indeed—even "Boule de Suif" took on a new and splendid grandeur. It was all rather ridiculous perhaps, but so long as there was no audience it mattered nothing at all—the maddening thought was that the whole town should laugh and jeer. Monsieur Félicité was furious at the thought. He thought and thought about it, but could come to no definite conclusion. He realised that his friend was a very sensitive person and that the whole matter was one of extreme delicacy. To tell him publicly would be impossible from every point of view—he could see the startled looks of his friends and he could hear the chatter pass round the room. No, whatever happened, it must be quietly done. At the next meeting in the Rue Soleil it chanced that Monsieur André was more talkative than ever. The stories

burst from him as laya from a volcano. It was in Paris and he had rescued a girl, a beautiful girl; he had had to climb with her on to roofs and then there had been only a telegraph-wire between them and death. He wiped his brow with an enormous red handkerchief at the recollection.

Monsieur Félicité's cheeks burned as he listened. This was the kind of thing at which they all laughed. He watched his friend—so pleased and proud, his hand in the air, his eyes twinkling, and at last that triumphant *"Eh! Moi, j'étais là!"*—then his eyes turned slowly to Monsieur Permon, Monsieur Raguilleau, Monsieur Marteau, Jacques Paturôt and the rest; they were sitting there quietly, gravely, sucking solemnly at their pipes, nodding approvingly as the climax was reached. He could fancy what they were thinking, what they would say afterwards to their wives, even young Paturôt—"That old André and his stories!"

He went back to his rooms very sad at heart, and as he sat gloomily by his fire he made up his mind to speak to his friend.

On the next evening Monsieur André came in to see Monsieur Félicité. He was happy and pleased—it seemed a good moment in which to say something. Monsieur André talked on—things that he had seen in the town: Madame Permon with her green umbrella and her pug; young Paturôt making verses behind the counter and so mixing the parcels, which only proved that it was better to do one thing at a time; funny and perplexing things that most intelligent of all dogs, "Boule de Suif," had seen fit to do. He rambled on. Monsieur Félicité sat awkwardly in his chair and said nothing—he was wondering how he ought to begin.

The light from the candles mingled with the firelight on the ceiling in little pools and whirling, twisting shadows—it caught the old twisted chairs, the brown cabinet, and at last danced on Monsieur André's nose.

Monsieur Félicité plunged.

"Mon ami——" he said, and paused.

"Yes," said Monsieur André, pulling "Boule de Suif's" ears and looking at the fire.

"There is a thing—that I would like to say." Monsieur

Félicité cleared his throat. "I have been wondering a little lately—only a little—about—well, about your stories; the histories, you know, of the war and the things that you have done."

"Yes," said Monsieur André, apparently gratified. "They are good stories."

"Well," said Monsieur Félicité, stammering in his agitation, "they are good stories—splendid stories—I like to listen, above all things. But—there are the others——"

"What others?" said Monsieur André, looking at his friend in a puzzled way.

"Well, Messieurs Permon, Raguilleau, Marteau . . . and others, our friends . . . they don't believe them, they laugh, they mock—and it hurts me, your friend. They think—that there is too much—that there is exaggeration——"

He paused. Monsieur André said nothing.

Monsieur Félicité went on desperately. "It is not I, you understand, who say that. You are my friend and I hate them to mock. They do it, perhaps, without thought. They do not know. . . ."

There was a long silence. Monsieur André was sitting very stiffly in his chair; the ball in his throat went up and down, and he made little clucking noises like a hen.

"You are my friend," he said at last, slowly, "and you say these things." He spoke in a whisper.

"It is not I," said Monsieur Félicité, "but the others—they say things and laugh. And I love you and I would not have you ridiculous."

At the word "ridiculous" Monsieur André, trembling with anger, rose from his chair; he stood, an enormous figure, in the firelight, one hand trembling in the air, the other hand clenched.

"You say that you are my friend, that you love me," he said, his voice shaking, "and you tell me that my stories are lies, that——"

"No," broke in Monsieur Félicité, "it is not I who say so——"

"But it is you!" cried Monsieur André with furious

triumph. "You, my friend. Pah! take that for your friendship!" and he wildly snapped his fingers. "And those others! Did I not go to them long before you? Have they not listened to my histories and am I such a fool, such a cuckoo, such a stuttering simpleton, that I cannot tell whether they believe them? Am I, indeed? No, it is you who cannot believe what I, your friend, say. A pretty friend! A liar, a knave, a teller of tales!" and Monsieur André again snapped his fingers.

"No, please." Monsieur Félicité, his eyes full of tears, rose from his seat and laid his hand on his friend's arm. Monsieur André shook it off and walked towards the door.

"You have called me a liar! You, my friend!" he shouted. "I have been called a liar and I will never forgive it! Never! Here is an end, for ever, monsieur! Never speak to me again! I know how to value your friendship. You have used language to me that has never been used to an André—it is enough—I shall not forget——"

He flung open the door and stamped furiously into the passage, followed by "Boule de Suif."

Madame Bette heard most of this from the other side of the keyhole, and that is how I know. Any one in Villeton will tell you the same.

Monsieur Félicité sat miserably in front of his fire, hoping that his friend would return. He knew his impetuous temper and that he ever said more than he really meant, and so he listened eagerly as the steps passed beneath his window and voices echoed down the street—but Monsieur André did not come. The coals clicked in little golden caverns, the light died, the grey ashes lay in little heaps where the fire had been, the candles jumped wildly up and down as they sank into their silver holders, little winds rose about the house and whistled at the window, the clock in the market-place struck one, and still Monsieur Félicité sat there. He was gone, his friend, and all that had made those last months so beautiful, so happy, had gone too. Whilst it had lasted he had not realised the security of it, the happiness of knowing that there was some one always there who cared for him. . . . He sat miserably reminiscent. In the

morning it was all about the town. Madame Bette had heard it, had seen Monsieur André leave the house. *"Oh! quel mauvais caractère . . . Mais, oui! il était en colère! . . . C'était effrayant!"* They discussed it at every corner.

On the afternoon of the next day they met, and Madame Permon, who saw them, said that it was pitiful. It was in the Rue des Ecoliers at the narrow corner by the cathedral, so that there was really no room at all and their coats brushed as they passed. Monsieur André was walking, his dog at his heels, with his head high and his moustaches twirled to the utmost twist of ferocity. Monsieur Félicité's head was down, and there were heavy lines under his eyes that showed that he had not slept. He stopped and held out his hand. Monsieur André pushed fiercely past him as though he had not been there.

After that there could be no question of compromise. Monsieur Félicité had his pride.

Yes, he had his pride, but he suffered terribly. In the first place he knew that the whole town would talk, was indeed talking with all its might. Groups at corners of the street; Madame Boileau's stall in the market-place, the favourite point of gossip in the town; M. Carité, the tailor, who, with his long nose and great spectacles, was always standing in his door ready for a word with his neighbour—all these people seemed to him bursting with the news. And they did talk of course. It was far too exciting a topic to leave untouched. There was no question of sides; poor Monsieur Félicité had been abominably treated, and that wretched gawk of an André deserved nothing better than a hanging—Monsieur Félicité, who had never quarrelled with any one in the whole of his life, to be pestered by such a creature! They tried to make it up to him, the good women, by little attentions and presents. On the morning after the quarrel the little man found on his table an enormous cucumber, half a ham, a red cotton handkerchief with spots, a pair of carpet slippers, a pair of braces, and a china vase. Madame Bette looked at these things contemptuously and then left the room in a flood of tears, murmuring *"Le*

pauvre! Le pauvre!" all the way down to the kitchen. But all this affection could in no way compensate for the loss of his friend. A hundred times a day he felt that he could bear it no longer and started out to make the peace and then, on the way, his pride would return to him, he would flush at the memory of the things that Monsieur André had said, and he would slowly return. He went out very little for fear lest they should meet in the street, and he scarcely dared to sit at his window.

Friday evening was a time of torture, for they both continued to go to the meetings at the "Soleil Rouge," because I think they tried to show to the world that it did not matter, this quarrel.

So there they used to sit, both of them as unhappy as possible.

Monsieur André suffered too, I suppose, and he had the execration of the whole town to bear. People would scarcely speak to him, and women would shake their fists at his back and little boys would throw stones at "Boule de Suif." And he loved Monsieur Félicité with an absolutely undying devotion; the longer the quarrel lasted the more he knew that he cared. But his pride was greater than Monsieur Félicité's's and he would not give way. Poor Monsieur Félicité grew quite thin and pale; his clothes hung loosely about him, and try as Madame Bette would, she could not keep him neat. He ate very little and slept badly at night. Monsieur André grew so fierce that it was as much as any one's life was worth to speak to him—he was even unkind to "Boule de Suif," and on one terrible occasion he kicked him.

So matters went on for several months, and there seemed to be no hope at all of any reconcilation. Then something happened.

One Friday night at the "Soleil Rouge" Monsieur Raguilleau had news. When Monsieur Raguilleau had news there was no mistaking it; he sat there with his eyes almost closed, his mouth pursed, his nose in the air. One had often to wait a considerable time before the news came—he liked to keep the sensation—but it was generally worth having.

He looked at his absinthe, tilted it for a moment in his glass, and then said:

"Marie has returned."

Every one was excited and there were murmurs of *"Mais non!"* and *"Vraiment!"* and *"Mon Dieu!"* passing round the table. Even Monsieur Félicité was moved; his cheeks coloured and he leaned a little forward. Monsieur André sat up straight in his chair and looked at Monsieur Raguilleau. "Marie!" he said with a gasp. Their minds flew back to the time, not so very long ago, when Marie Blanche had lightened the whole town with her smiles—wonderful hair, cheeks like roses, a laugh like a bell, and the temper of an angel! And then a man had come, a fellow from another province, good-looking enough in a black, fierce kind of way, but a scoundrel if ever there was one. She had loved him and gone with him, and her mother had died of grief—and now she had come back alone.

"She is ill," said Monsieur Raguilleau. "She has a baby. He did not marry her."

He brought his sentence out with a certain sharp satisfaction. He was sorry for the girl of course, but it was something to be able to create a sensation.

"Where is she?" said Monsieur Marteau.

"In a room, 5 Rue Napoléon—the top floor—I have not seen her." This he added in vindication of his own moral conduct. After all he had his character to think about. Marie was no better than she ought to be, and it would not do for respectable citizens . . . Nevertheless he shifted a little, uncomfortably, in his chair.

"Well, well," said Monsieur Permon, also rather uneasy. "Poor thing, poor thing! Still it's her own fault . . . hum . . . ha . . . the brute . . . dear me!" and so left it perfectly clear that he could have nothing to do with the matter. This was the general attitude of the table. We were very respectable in Villeton and it didn't do to be mixed up with that sort of thing.

Monsieur Félicité went back to his rooms and summoned Madame Bette.

"Voyez," he said, "I want things—many things."

"Things, monsieur?" she said.

"Yes," he answered impatiently, "for one who is ill—nourishing things—soups and puddings and fruit—and quickly."

Soon, carrying an enormous basket, he passed into the dark street. He took unfrequented paths because he did not wish to be met by any one. They did talk so in Villeton. His thoughts were all with the girl—poor Marie! She had been the delight of the town in those earlier days, and now that scoundrel . . . He clenched his fist and made a little noise in his throat. The Rue Napoléon was very dark, being, indeed, only lighted by one very dismal lamp. No. 5 was a tall and gloomy house with shuttered windows—on the top floor a light was dimly burning.

Monsieur Félicité banged the knocker and the door was opened by an old woman.

"Madame Perite? You have Marie here?"

"Ah! Monsieur!" The old woman burst into tears. "It is pitiful. Until just now no one had come, and it is terrible. She has no money . . . and she suffers. *Mon Dieu!* how she suffers! Ah! they are hard, these people."

She held a candle above her head and led the way up the dark stairs. On the top landing she turned and pushed open the door.

"Take the candle, monsieur," she said.

He stepped into the room. It was a large attic—the roof slanted to either side; there was little furniture. A bed against the farther wall, two rickety chairs, a table, and on the chimney-piece a guttering candle.

In the waving light the girl's head lay dark against the white of the pillows; by the bedside a man was kneeling, and at the sound of his voice Monsieur Félicité started, the candle shook in his hand, and he stayed motionless by the door.

"Nay, but Marie, poor little Marie. . . . I will look after the babe. I will see to it that you do not suffer——"

The girl laughed. "Why, Monsieur André—you and the baby!—that would be truly droll. Why, you would not

know what to do. But, indeed, monsieur, I am better already now that you have come. There was no one and I was afraid. . . . I knew what they would say——"

She turned her head on the pillow and began to cry softly.

That was too much for Monsieur Félicité. He crossed the room with his basket. He had, for the moment, forgotten Monsieur André.

"Marie . . . little one. It is I, your old friend. Droll Monsieur Félicité with whom you laughed. I had only just heard and I hurried here. And see, here in a basket I have brought things for you and the baby . . . beautiful things."

He went down on his little fat knees by the bed and put his arm round her.

"Ah, monsieur!" she said, and she fainted. At the same moment the baby began to cry.

"*Ah, mon Dieu!* She has fainted! Quick!" he cried to Monsieur André. "Take the baby! I will see to her!"

Monsieur André clumsily picked the baby up and began to hold it upside down. Its cries were redoubled.

"*Mais, non! Pas comme ca!*" Monsieur Félicité took it for a moment and rocked it in his arms. "Like that! Look you——" He gave the baby back, and for a moment their hands touched. He bent over the girl. In a little while he had brought her to.

"Oh! It was silly of me. But oh! monsieur, you are so good to me . . . it was too much!"

He knelt by the bed and whispered to her.

Monsieur André stood an enormous shape in the candlelight, rocking the baby.

"Now," Marie said, turning her cheek on the pillows with a smile. "I shall sleep. Ah! messieurs, how good you both are to me."

Soon she slept. There was silence for some time. Then Monsieur Félicité got up from his knees and crossed over to Monsieur André. He put his hand on the other's shoulder; Monsieur André did not look up. His hand passed over his shoulder around his neck; he had to stand on tip-toe.

"*Mon ami,* I am sorry. It is I who have been wrong. I have been lonely—I have been miserable——"

Monsieur André rocked the baby furiously.

"No, but forgive me. I should not have spoken as I did. Carefully, you will wake the baby——"

Monsieur André turned and laid it on the bed.

"No, it is I," he said fiercely, glaring at Monsieur Félicité. "What you have said is true. It is I who have done this. I am a liar, a pig, a scoundrel. . . . It is all true."

"No, no," said Monsieur Félicité.

"But it is true. It is not good for you to have such a man for your friend—you who are so good, a hero. But I will try . . . I will tell no more stories. . . . I cannot be without you." He turned and clutched his friend by the coat. "I am very unhappy," he said.

They slowly and solemnly embraced; then, with one last look at the two asleep on the bed, they crept from the room.

RED AND WHITE[1]

By Roland Pertwee

If we could but forget by heart
The many things we never knew,
Should we not give a greater part
To what is fanciful and true?

I AM sixteen and a half and quite old enough to know better. That's what uncle said, and I hate him, yes, I do, even though I believe it was aunt who made him say it, and of course I never could stand her. If they went down on their knees and begged me to forgive them, it wouldn't be any use.

Between them they spoiled the most beautiful thing that ever happened and made it look all horrid and wrong—and —I can't think of the word. And I know now that if I met Mooly I should go all red, and she'd go all white, and we'd talk some nonsense about bicycles or whether it was fine or not, and try and get away from each other as quickly as we could. We shall feel we ought to be ashamed of something there was no shame in, but the heavenliest time two people ever spent together.

When we grow up, I often wonder, do we all grow beastly? Do we all see things wrong and twisted, and miss the best every time? It seems to me we do, and so I hate all grown-ups as much as I hate uncle and aunt. I think I shall go away somewhere and hide, or be a hermit and spend the rest of my days remembering Mooly and trying to forget all the rest.

But before I go I want to make a clean breast of every-

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thing in the hope that there is at least some one who will see it just as it really and truly is.

My name is Dorian Festubert, and my mother died when I was born, so she never had the chance to be as lovely to me as I know she would have been. When my father heard that she was dead he went up to the bedroom and kissed her and said "What a happy time we've missed, my dear!" Then he went into the garden and shot himself.

I have always been awfully proud of my father for that, and one day when I heard aunt telling some one the story, and saying, "They were a very hysterical family," I flew into a fearful rage, and said all sorts of things I shouldn't have said about her mothers' meeting and the rotten presents of vegetables she gave to the parish poor. There was no end of a scene, and uncle said I was an ill-conditioned young pup and didn't know what respect meant.

"Well," said I, "you don't know what love means and never will."

After that I had a hiding, four with the back and two with the bristles; but I wasn't a bit sorry, because what I had said was true.

They wouldn't let me go to a decent public school, like any other boy, because of its "polluting influences," whatever they may be. I should think uncle must have gone to a public school all right, and got properly polluted—and aunt, too.

I had governesses with spectacles until I was twelve years old. They wore dresses that buttoned down the front because none of the servants would ever do anything for them. They taught me grammar and arithmetic, and read aloud from the New Testament and Thomas à Kempis.

We lived in a big house with what might have been jolly grounds. The reason why they weren't jolly was because there were no wild parts. Every square inch was cultivated. You know, close-cut grass, horrible cactus, carpet beds, very tidy gravel paths, and rolls of wire netting round all the little trees.

The inside of the house was just as bad. Everything had

a place. If you moved an ornament half an inch, it was always put back. When there was a spring cleaning on, and the furniture was piled up in a heap, you could see a map on the pile of carpets showing where every single chair or table had to go. There was nowhere where a chap could make a good old mess. Even the outhouses were the same—nails in the beams to hang the bass brooms on, and all that kind of thing.

Uncle and aunt were crazy about orderliness and method. Never in my life did I hear either of them say they had lost anything. They were frightfully punctual, too. Old aunt used to bend her knees before sitting on the church pew at exactly the same second every Sunday in the year. I am sure she believed that if she had been a moment late Peter would have bolted the gates of heaven on her for good and all.

We never knew anybody worth knowing; all their friends were frightfully plain, and the servants were simply chronic. They were the "Now, Master Dorian, you mustn't do that" kind of servants.

How I longed for a decent pal, some chap I could talk to or go strodding with! A strod is a catapult, you know. I invented the word myself; I had to keep it jolly dark that I had a strod. Sometimes I used to steal out early in the morning and go and smash bottles on the big rubbish heap a quarter of a mile away. But it wasn't much fun when there was no one to sing out, "Good shot!" or, "Bossed!" and that sort of thing. Things weren't much better when the last governess went and I was "put with" the vicar's class.

There were about five other boys there, rotten, swotting chaps with round spectacles and pimples. I think they hated me because I was tall and had wavy hair and—well, my pater was jolly good-looking, and people used to say I was very like him. Then, again, they were fed up with me because I used to say potty things about how stunning the rhododendrons looked and how the water seemed to laugh in the mill brook. They said I was putting on side, but I wasn't really. I couldn't help noticing all the jolly

colours and sounds in the country, and I don't see any reason why a chap shouldn't talk about 'em. They are much more interesting than pencil-boxes or nibs.

From the way they mugged at their lessons they ought to have been awfully clever. They hadn't eyes or ears for anything else. I remember once, after I had seen a crocodile of girls from the high school go by,—one or two were so pretty that I'd have liked to speak to them; I have hardly ever spoken to a girl,—I asked one of these chaps —his name was Clumber; a hideous sort of name, which just suited him—if he had ever kissed a girl, and what it was like.

"Don't be beastly," he said.

I said that I couldn't see anything beastly in it, and thought it would be jolly nice, if she was pretty.

"It's beastly to talk about those things," was all he answered.

I am sure, if uncle and aunt had had a son, he'd have been just like old Clumber. But whoever it is who arranges these things knew, I expect, that it would be a rotten sort of family for a boy, and so they never sent one along.

Orderliness, method, and routine are things that any decent boy properly hates. What he wants is plenty of fun and some one to be jolly sympathetic with him when he feels down.

There was no sympathy with uncle and aunt. It was what I should call a no-kissing household. Uncle didn't approve of kissing, and aunt kissed people only after they were dead. They wouldn't have let her do it if they had been alive.

The only person who ever kissed me was the old doctor who had attended my mother.

Uncle used to spend the entire day in his study, and aunt, when she had finished her orders and had a good pry round for dust, did parish calls, or knitting with grey wool. They never spent much time together.

The most exciting thing that ever happened was when uncle bought the motor-car. He used it for visiting some

of his property, and as he was too mean to keep a chauffeur and in a blue funk of driving himself, he had me taught.

Once a year their niece Elizabeth came down to spend a few days. I never took much notice of her because aunt trotted her round all day. Besides, she wasn't my sort. She was a flat little thing, and I always suspected her of telling tales; so her visits were hardly an event. Nevertheless, it was through her that the wonderful day came about.

At the end of the summer term, a few days before she was expected, aunt had a letter at breakfast and said:

"Jane asks if Elizabeth may bring a school friend with her on Friday. Apparently she is staying with them for the holidays, and as Jane wants to shut up house for a few weeks, it will be awkward if we can't have her."

"Can't she go to her own people?" said uncle.

"Apparently she is an orphan. Jane took it for granted we would not refuse, because she says here that Miss Muriel O'Reagh has some relatives at Felton who want her and Elizabeth to go over there on Friday night."

"Oh, well, if you can arrange it," said uncle.

"Dorian could drive them there in the car and see that they come home in good time."

"So long as I'm not bothered with a whole lot of details," said uncle.

I felt rather a thrill at the idea of this strange girl coming to stay with us, but my spirits fell a bit when I thought she would most likely turn out a second Elizabeth, only more so.

Well, on Friday, about midday, I started up the car and went off to the station. Aunt would have come, but as it was only a two-seater, with a dicky behind, and I had to collect two people, she stayed at home.

It was a simply lovely morning, birds singing like blazes and the sun shining like old fits. I felt in no end of a jolly state of mind, and I took some of the corners on the way in fine style. I arrived at the station ten minutes too soon, so I walked up and down the platform waiting for the train. Presently I heard it in the distance, and knew in

another few minutes Elizabeth's face would be at a carriage window, in an awful stew for fear there would be no one to meet her. When the train pulled in there was no sign of Elizabeth, however, but looking out of one of the carriage windows was the loveliest girl I had ever seen.

She had a little, white, oval face, and her hair was the colour of old copper the day before it's cleaned. Reddy gold, you know, with bluey lights on it. Her eyes were green—the sort of green turquoises get if you wash them. I don't know how to describe these things; I only know that nothing in heaven could hold a candle to her.

I forgot all about Elizabeth, and ran to the place opposite which her carriage had stopped just to have another look. It seemed pretty certain she wouldn't get out at our potty little station, so I had to make the most of her while she lasted.

Then the most extrordinary thing happened. She opened the carriage door and stepped out, and there behind her, sitting on the seat and looking very strange, was Elizabeth.

Of course, when I saw that, I made a dash for the carriage door, and she—*the* she, not Elizabeth—asked:

"Are you Dorian Festubert?"

Although I could scarcely speak, I managed to say I was.

"But you are not Muriel O'Reagh, are you?" I said.

"Why not?"

"I—I didn't think you possibly could be."

"Elizabeth has been taken ill," she said, as if she had suddenly remembered her, "with a most dreadful headache."

Well, I pulled myself together at that, and pretended to be awfully bucked to see Elizabeth. She certainly did look jolly ill. Her face was a sort of pasty white, with red blotches on it. It was simply frightful to look at her after Muriel O'Reagh; so I just turned and looked the right way.

Then Muriel said:

"Hadn't you better get out our bags? The train'll be moving in a minute."

It sounded ripping as she said it, though it doesn't "look up to" much written down.

I managed to hitch old Elizabeth on to the platform,

where she tottered about like one o'clock; and to show how strong I was, I got hold of all their luggage, and portered it myself to the car in one go. I never felt prouder than while I was carrying Muriel's bag. As a matter of fact, she didn't notice me much, because she was aiding old Elizabeth's faltering footsteps.

It was rather jolly being in sole charge of the car, but unfortunately, Elizabeth being ill, I had to ask her to sit beside me. Muriel was on the dicky-seat behind, and as it was not too safe, I drove home pretty carefully—for me. Just once I brought off rather a showy bit of steering between a dog-cart and a hay-wain. Elizabeth let go a scream, but Muriel didn't; so I knew she was plucky as well as perfectly lovely.

When we arrived at the house, aunt came out, and made no end of a fuss at the sight of Elizabeth and declared she must go straight to bed; she took scarcely any notice of Muriel.

It had been arranged that they were to share a room, but aunt said, as Elizabeth might have something catching, Muriel must sleep in another, which was down the same corridor as mine.

I carried up her things, and loosened the straps so she wouldn't have to bother. There was a jolly spray of tea-roses growing outside the window, and I cut it off, and put it in the water-jug to make things look cheerful. I was going to wait for her to come up; but just then I heard aunt calling, so I had to chuck that scheme.

I was to go and fetch the doctor at once, said aunt, because "Miss O'Reagh" thought it was measles Elizabeth had got. They had had it badly at school, and Elizabeth was the only one who had escaped.

I was pretty fed up at having to go out, especially as the doctor lived five miles away; so I suggested that Muriel might enjoy the ride. But aunt said certainly not; that she would be busy putting away her things until lunch-time.

Then I remembered how aunt always inspected visitors' rooms to see that they had arranged everything as she

thought proper. I sort of guessed Muriel would fling her clothes about a bit, so I pretended I had left my cap on the bed, and slipped up-stairs to give her the tip.

The door of her room was open. She had taken off her hat, and the sun was shining on her head. Then I noticed that she seemed to have two sorts of hair, the smooth sort that went all over her head like a little, wavy cap, and just above that a kind of dancy fluff that reminded me of halos in Bible pictures.

I must have looked rather a fool standing there staring, but she didn't seem to mind. She looked at me, too, with her sad, green eyes, and presently she said:

"You are tall, Dorian."

I didn't know what to answer, so I just blurted out about aunt's fussings around.

"Thank you," she said. "I should have thrown everything about if you hadn't warned me."

"I have to fetch the doctor," I told her. "Would you like to have a walk this afternoon?"

"Rather!"

"Right-o. After lunch, then."

When I brought back the doctor, and he said there was no doubt Elizabeth had the measles, uncle got into an awful stew, because he couldn't remember if he had ever had it or not.

He wouldn't let aunt go near the room, for fear she would "take it," so he said; but as a matter of fact it was because he was frightened of catching it from her if she did.

The conversation at lunch was simply awful. I felt frightfully ashamed of both of them. They made it quite plain that Muriel's being there was, "under the circumstances, most unfortunate." As usual they jumped down my throat every time I spoke a word, and, what was worse, uncle corrected me twice for table manners.

"I shall be out this afternoon," said aunt, "and Mr. Ransart will be busy in his study [Asleep, that meant]. I hope you are interested in reading, for there will be little else for you to do."

"Thank you," said Muriel. "Perhaps if I might sit in the garden with a book——"

Then aunt fetched a bound copy of "The Churchman," and went off to her meeting. Uncle went to his study, and Muriel, looking very crestfallen, sat under the shade of a tidy little tree and pretended to read.

After giving aunt and uncle about twenty minutes to get off, I slipped out into the garden and joined her.

"Are you enjoying that book?" I asked.

"No."

"Did you like uncle and aunt?"

She shook her head.

"It must be awful to live with them," she said.

"I should think it is!" I answered.

"Have you always?"

I nodded.

"Ever since I was a baby. My mother died when I was born, and so my father shot himself."

"How splendid!" she said, with her eyes very wide open. "My mother and father were like that, too. They lived in India,—I came home when I was five, you know,—and he got cholera. Mother would nurse him, although they begged her not to. She knew he was going to die, and she didn't want to be left behind."

"That's what I call love," said I, "but it's a little sad for us. Who looks after you now?"

"School-mistresses in the term-time, and in the holidays generally some one is hired by my guardian."

"Who's your guardian? Is he nice?"

"He's a firm of solicitors; that's all."

I waited for a minute before saying:

"I wish they'd engage me."

"I wish they would. I'd like that."

"Would you?"

"U-m."

"Do you like me, then?"

"Yes, awfully."

"How lovely! I don't think anybody ever has before."

"Why not? I shouldn't have thought they could help it."

"Uncle and aunt seem to help it all right," I said.

"Poor you!"

Then I asked:

"Haven't you any one, either, who makes a fuss over you?"

"No."

"Isn't it funny? We are just alike."

"I suppose a boy doesn't mind so much."

"Doesn't he, just? I can tell you he does. It's awful sometimes. I used to think it was bad when I was little, but it's much worse now. Often I lie in bed and long and long—I don't rightly know what I long for. Perhaps it's my mother, or, at any rate, somebody to love me. Do you know?"

"U-m. I feel like that often. It's horrid to be lonely, and to know you just must be lonely and there's no help for it."

She had the sweetest way of saying things I ever heard.

"I have never talked to a girl before," I told her—"not really talked."

"I've never really talked to a boy, but I've often wanted to. Do you mind being called a boy?"

"No; I'd rather. Aunt speaks of me as a 'youth,' and uncle as a 'growing lad.' Don't you think that they are horrible words?"

"Almost as bad as a young lady."

"That's bad enough. How old are you?"

"Sixteen."

"I'm that, too—sixteen and a bit. It's a jolly age. I don't want to grow much older. Did you hear aunt correct me for calling you Muriel? You didn't mind, did you?"

"I'd sooner you called me Mooly."

"Would you really?"

"Yes; because nobody ever has."

I can't tell you what it was like calling her Mooly for the first time, and when she decided that I should be Dory instead of Dorian, I wanted to hug her.

"Mooly," I said, "you are the most loveliest and dearestest girl in all the world, and I love you always and absolutely."

"Oh, I'm glad you do," she said, "because I do you, too; and if you hadn't, I should have been as miserable as wretched could be."

"Then you needn't," I cried out, "because I adore you twice as much as I did a minute ago." And I took her hand, which was little and pink and warm, and held it in mine for simply ages, and neither of us said a word.

It seems funny, but being frightfully happy makes one stop talking. All sorts of glorious thoughts pour into your head; but when you try and put them into words, they won't come good enough. They stop at the back of your throat and make you gulp. But every time a thought comes you know and she knows, because you hold each other's hands a wee bit tighter, and all the unsaid words thrill backward and forward through your fingers.

When I spoke at last it wasn't in the least the sort of thing you'd have expected.

"I was going to drive you over to Felton to-night in the car."

"Yes. Won't it be nice?"

"I expect, now Elizabeth's ill, aunt'll try and stop us going. It wouldn't be a bad idea to ask her to come, too."

"But s'pose she says 'Yes'?"

"She won't. But perhaps she wouldn't stop us going if you asked her. D'you see?"

"I'll ask her, then."

After that we went for a walk round the grounds, and I showed her all the hiding-places I had made when I was a kid. There was one in the middle of some rhododendron-bushes where I had plaited branches and made a secret wigwam. In one corner was a tiny cemetery of pets I had had who died: a bullfinch, two white mice, and a little robin that was half tame and used to eat crumbs out of my hand. There was an oyster-shell at the head of each grave, and on the anniversaries of their deaths I used to put down very small wreaths of lawn daisies. It seemed so strange to be telling any one about these things, which I had never spoken of before; but somehow, once I was

started, I could say anything I liked to Mooly, and she could do just the same with me.

By the time tea came we hadn't any secrets left at all.

"About this visit to your friends at Felton," said aunt.

"Yes," said Mooly; "I was going to ask if you could come, too, Mrs. Ransart."

"That would be impossible," she answered; but what Mooly said had saved the situation, for I know she was going to stop us. As it was, she let us go, after giving us all sorts of instructions, and insisting we should not be later than nine-thirty.

At six o'clock I started up the car, and away we drove. And what a drive it was! We just whizzed along, and there was Mooly close beside me, with her lovely red hair blowing across my face. I felt I wanted to sing; I did sing, and all the woods and the fields seemed to be singing, too. Of course, I went miles out of the way, and we didn't turn up until quarter to eight.

They were real nice people, those friends of Mooly's father and mother. They gave us a top-hole dinner, and actually had the decency to chuck me over a case of cigarettes.

There was a sort of ripping disorder about the house. Not untidy, you know, but homish, as if people kept everything where they liked it best. I saw a pair of slippers under an easy-chair, and when one of the sons, who was a bit late for dinner, came in, he kicked off his shoes in the hall and yelled to one of the servants to sling him down a pair of pumps. That's what I call living. I tried to picture aunt's face if I were to have done the same.

It was simply rotten having to leave at nine o'clock, and if it hadn't been that Mooly and I were to be together, I should have chanced the row and stayed a bit longer.

After saying good-by about twice all round, we hopped into the car and started for home. The moon was out, and the stars looked bright and winky, and there was a husky sort of feeling in the air. It was a wee bit cold, so Mooly nestled up very close, and as there was a foot-accelerator,

I drove with one hand, and put my other arm round her shoulder.

"I am happy, Dory," she said.

And I whispered:

"So am I. I feel as if we are all alone in the world."

"Wouldn't it be lovely if we could drive on like this until the dawn comes."

"I wish we could forever," I said.

Then for nearly two miles we said nothing, and I thought of the glorious week we would spend together.

"I don't know what I shall do when you go, Mooly," I said at last.

"We mustn't even think of that. You look so big and splendid in the moonlight, Dory."

"Shall I tell you how beautiful you are?" I asked; and when she said "Yes," I turned my head to look down on her, so that I could see every little feature that I wanted to praise, and the car ran into a heap of stones and burst the front tire.

We had a very narrow squeak of being tipped into the road. I got out at once to see what had happened. The old tire had gone badly.

"There's a spare tube in the back," I said. "I'll whip this off and put it on."

So I got a jack and some levers from under the seat, and after about ten minutes had the burst tube out.

Mooly sat on the stone heap and watched while I worked, and I told her she was like a fairy on a toadstool.

Of course, when I opened the box at the back of the car, I found the other tube had been left at home.

"Isn't it there?" she asked.

I shook my head.

"I say, I'm awfully sorry, but we shall have to walk. It won't take long across the fields; then I can fetch a stepney wheel and come back for the car. I was a fool to run into those stones."

"You couldn't help it," she said.

Then I took her hand, and we started off along a little path through the green wheat.

"I like this best, Dory," she said. "It's just as if we were Adam and Eve."

"Just," I answered; "only I'm sure Eve wasn't half so lovely as you are."

"Do you love me a lot, Dory?"

"If I were to try and tell you how much, Mooly, you'd never believe."

"But I should like you to try."

So I tried, and told her that I loved her like two looking-glasses opposite each other which reflected backward and forward, forward and backward, until at last they came to a tiny grey point no bigger than a midge's eye and too small for any one to see.

"And that's forever, Mooly," I said, and looking up, I found we'd arrived home, and there was a light in the dining-room window, where aunt was sitting waiting for us.

When I saw it I turned to Mooly.

"We had better say good night now, because when I've taken you in I must go back for the car."

"You promise to take great, great care of yourself?"

"Of course."

"I sha'n't go to sleep until I know you are safely back, and I shall be thinking about tramps all the time."

"I'll just tap at your door to show I'm all right. Shall I?"

"Yes, please."

"Then good night, now."

"Goo' night, Dory."

"Mooly, I—I want to kiss you awfully. May I?"

"I want you to."

And I did, and it was like—oh, I don't know what it was like, but never anything so sweet had ever happened to me before. It was the first time I had ever felt happy all over—so happy that I wanted to cry.

We went in and explained to aunt what had happened. It was half-past ten, and although she was better about it than I expected, she was pretty shirty.

"Go to bed as quickly as you can," she told Mooly. "And you, Dorian, must lose no time in bringing back the car.

When you do come in don't make a noise and disturb your uncle."

As I was crossing the hall I heard her saying:

"Mr. Ransart and I have decided, in the circumstances, it will be best for you to return to my sister in the morning."

I spun round as if I had been shot, and walked back to the room.

"What is it, Dorian?"

"I—I thought you called me," I lied.

"I did nothing of the kind. Please hurry. We don't want to be up all night."

And as there was nothing I could say I just went. In a kind of a dream I got that beastly stepney wheel, and tramped back over those hateful fields.

Mooly was going to-morrow—my Mooly. She was going away, and perhaps I should never see her again.

I think I felt then as my father felt when mother died. I just banged the old stepney on anyhow, chucked the tools into the car, jerked up the starting-handle, and flung myself into the driver's seat.

It was about two miles by road and I went as recklessly as I could, and didn't care. I only just missed hitting the parapet of the little bridge and landing in the stream below. I was sorry I had missed. I wished I could drive over a precipice or fling myself under a train.

Then I remembered my promise to Mooly to be careful, and slowed up a bit.

Did she mind as much as I was minding? Was she as miserable as I was? No one could be.

Up the drive I went, skidded into the garage, kicked up the switch of the headlight, and walked into the house.

How vile it looked, the tidy umbrella-stand, the silly plate with the visiting-cards, and the row of brushes hanging on brass hooks! I loathed it all; I would like to have set the whole place on fire.

I went to my bedroom and dragged off my clothes. In the looking-glass I saw that my face was filthy with smears of oil on it that made me furious. So I shoved on a dressing-gown and, collaring my pajamas, went off to have a bath.

I honestly believe that bath saved me from doing something violent, for under the warm water I lost my horrible resentfulness and could think only of what a wonderful day it had been and remember that never-to-be-forgotten good night in the garden. Then I dried myself, put on my pajamas and dressing-gown, brushed my hair, and turned off the light.

As I passed down the passage I could hear uncle and aunt having their snoring competition. Aunt's was the worse by a long chalk. She had a frantic habit of leaving off for a second or two, then giving a kind of "snork" like a pig. Often I thanked Heaven my room was a long way from theirs, because once, when there was a spring cleaning and I moved to one next door, I couldn't sleep all night for the vile row they made.

I blew out the candle at the top of the stairs and turned down the passage leading to my room.

Outside Mooly's door I stopped. The moon was shining on her two little shoes put out to be cleaned. I picked them up and kissed them.

"She's asleep by now," I thought. "It would wake her up if I kept my promise and knocked." Oh, how I longed to hear her voice just once more! But I was very strong-minded, and, so as not to make a sound, I stooped down and put the shoes back in their place as quietly as a mouse. And then I saw that there was a wee flicker of light coming through the crack under the door. My heart gave a big thump. She wasn't asleep, then, or perhaps she had fallen asleep and left the candle burning. That thought made me awfully panicky. Suppose the candle fell over and set fire to the bed.

I stood a long time biting my nails and wondering what to do. At last I made up my mind. I would knock ever so softly, and if she didn't answer, I would steal into the room and blow out the light.

Taking a deep breath, I tapped just once, and in an instant I heard:

"That you, Dory?"

"Yes."

"Oh, I've been so frightened. I thought you'd had an accident. I never heard you come back."

"I'm all right, Mooly. Good night, dear."

"Won't you come and kiss me good night?"

And that was what I had prayed and prayed she would say.

She was sitting up in bed when I stole in, and her lovely hair was on her shoulders like a shawl; but I saw that her eyes were all wet and dim.

"Have you been crying?"

"Yes; because I was afraid, and because——"

"Because you are going away from me to-morrow?"

She bit her lower lip and nodded, and I broke out with:

"O Mooly, Mooly, when I think of it I want to cry, too!"

And I sat down by the bed, and I kissed her, and she kissed me, and we clung to each other so tightly that we could hardly breathe.

"This is like years ago, when I was five," she said at last.

"It's like never before with me," I answered; "but I know now that what I've always longed for was this."

After a while she dropped her head on the pillow and my arm was round her neck and my head beside hers.

"Isn't this lovely?" she—what is the word? Is it "crooned?" I don't think there is a right one. I only know I could scarcely hear what she said, but I could feel it against my cheek.

And so we remained for ever so long, and both my slippers fell off to the floor, and the candle burned very low.

"It's worth having been lonely for years not to be lonely now," I whispered. "Did two people ever before love each other as much as we do?"

I felt her shake her head in the dark, for the candle flickered and went out as I spoke. I held her a little tighter then, because I couldn't see her any longer, and she sighed in a way that sounded happier than anything in the world.

It's hard to talk in the dark, so we didn't try, and the time stole on; after a long, long while I knew that she was asleep. Then, oh, more gently than you would believe, I put my cheek against hers and closed my eyes.

It was broad daylight when I was wakened by a hand shaking my shoulder. Looking up, I saw uncle standing by the bed. A little way off was aunt, and her mouth was closed so tight that it had almost disappeared. I could see uncle was furious; but before he could speak I said:

"Hush! Don't wake her up!"

"Take him away," said aunt; "I'll remain here."

I was going to flare up at that, but uncle, who was very strong when he liked, clapped a hand over my mouth and, gripping me by the collar of my dressing-gown, dragged me from the room.

I am not going to tell any more of this story. I wouldn't repeat a word uncle said to me if you paid me a hundred million pounds. And all the vile time he was talking I knew that aunt was saying the same hateful, wicked things to Mooly.

When he had finished he locked me in his dressing-room. He might have saved himself the trouble, for I shouldn't have come out until she had gone. He had just spoiled everything.

And now you know why if I met Mooly I should go all red and she'd go all white and we'd talk about bicycles or rubbish.

I heard the cab that took her away soon after nine, and I just stood in a corner and choked and wished I'd never been born. It's a horrible, hateful world, and all the people in it excepting Mooly are beastly, beastly, beastly.

MAN AND BRUTE

By E. L. Grant Watson

I

DOWN the long white road that leads to Armadale a horseman cantered at a slow and regular pace. On either side of him stretched the limitless scrub of slender eucalyptus saplings. The green and pink leaves of the trees blended to a delicate mauve in the evening light. Overhead, the sky flushed from crimson to orange-yellow as the sun sank behind the bleak and rugged contour of an upstanding hill. That day the horseman had ridden some forty miles across open country, and both he and his beast were tired. Now that he saw the white roofs of Armadale lying clustered together in the valley below him, he urged forward his horse over the soft, sandy road. He had reckoned on reaching the town earlier in the afternoon, but had been delayed on the journey and was now anxious to make up for lost time. Behind him a cloud of dust hung in the still air. The thud of his horse's hoofs and the occasional whistle of a bird were the only sounds that broke the stillness.

When he entered the town he found few people moving in the street, but he shouted to the first man that he met and asked his way to the doctor's house. He reined up for a few moments while the man gave him his directions, then hurried on again.

Half an hour later the doctor drove his sulky at a fast trot over the dusty road. By that time darkness was settling upon the land, night-moving animals were stirring in the bush on either side, and the doctor could see as he drove by the dark forms of wallabies crouching in the grass.

The first miles, over the made road, were easy going, but then difficulties arose. The track into the bush on the right was hard to find, and when found was not easy to follow.

Dr. Laurence was a man unused to the wild life of bush country. He had only lately come from Sydney and he was always a little nervous of crossing open scrub after dark. To his unaccustomed eyes, bushtracks were difficult to follow at the best of times, and now, when he turned off the road, he had to keep all his wits about him and not let his horse stray into the open spaces of the bush, which stretched out in grey glades and avenues on either side. Often he had to climb down from his seat and make sure of the track by the light of his side lanterns. It was necessary here to go at a slow pace, for the ground was uneven and the way was often blocked by dead timber that lay rotting where it had fallen. At one time he was even minded to turn back, but being a kindhearted and generous man, he pushed on in spite of difficulties. The thought of the disabled shepherd, solitary and suffering, kept him to his resolution.

After a laborious hour of slow travelling he came to the wire fence of which the horseman had spoken. In front of him he could see an open stretch of salt-bush country—bare, open ground covered by stunted white-leaved bushes. Away on the left he could see the dark line of the trees. They looked massive enough in the darkness, but he knew that, like most of the Australian bush, they grew sparse and feathery on the dry soil.

While he was tying up his horse he became conscious of the extreme stillness of the night. Now that the wheels of the sulky no longer crunched their way over dead branches, he suddenly felt the silence as if it were a concrete and tangible thing. The trees around him were very still; they seemed to wait in suspense as if afraid of rustling their leaves. His horse breathed long, hot breaths. There was no other sound but the cracking of a twig under his own foot. As he lifted down his bag he had a slight regret that he must leave the friendly companionshop of

his horse. In that wild, uncultivated land they both seemed such insignificant and lonely creatures that he felt it improvident that they should separate.

The night was cloudless, and overhead the sky was rich with glittering stars. No moon shone, but in the starlight the stunted salt-bushes looked like a sea of grey wool which spread flat to the far horizon, where it mingled with the darker tinted depths of the sky. As the doctor forced his way forward he disturbed numberless bandicoots and wallabies, which scuttled or leapt hurriedly away. The earth underfoot seemed to be swarming with life, and this he felt to be strange, for often in the daytime had he ridden across such open stretches of country and had been surprised at the absence of animal life. But now, at night, everything was changed—life was more vigorous and more potent. He was conscious of an all-pervading power that brooded over the land and which lent to it a quality of poignancy and sweetness that he had never before tasted. He was glad then that he had come; not only glad to be on an errand of mercy and performing his duty, but glad also to flavour in this unexpected way the rich sweetness of the hushed and vigorous earth.

For some distance he walked on, keeping always in sight of the line of trees on the left. Then he stood still and shouted. His voice sounded for a moment very resonant and strong in the night air. The sound died abruptly as if lost in the silence. He listened for an answering shout, but heard nothing. Perhaps he had kept too far out in the open. He struck in towards the trees, and walked half a mile further; again he shouted, but got no answer.

Again he walked on a short distance, then suddenly he saw the shepherd's hut quite close to him. He was surprised at finding it so close and was alarmed that there should have been no answer to his call. He hurried forward, and as he approached saw that the door was standing ajar. He could see that inside the hut a light was burning.

The silence, which at first had awed him, but which later had seemed invigorating and refreshing, was again touched with fear. The small building, surrounded as it

was by low bushes and the flat expanse of desolate plain, looked strangely insignificant. So small an evidence of man's energy in the face of Nature's greatness was, in the all-enfolding silence of the night, disheartening and almost pathetic. The doctor wondered what had happened in the last few hours in that tiny space—why had he received no answer to his call, which at that distance must have been clearly audible? Had he, perhaps, come too late? He hurried anxiously forward and laid his hand upon the door.

II

Five hours previously the horseman, who was to fetch relief to the sick man, had galloped away and the old shepherd and his dog had looked at one another as they listened to the sound of his departing horse's hoofs. As their eyes met they were both conscious of their sudden loneliness. The dog shifted his gaze uneasily and looked round the hut; it was a small protection indeed, a tiny island of man's foothold in the midst of the wide expanse of bush that stretched in all directions. On the ceiling of the hut numberless flies were crawling; others made a monotonous buzzing in the hot air. The shepherd lay still upon his bed, crippled by his sudden illness. After a while he stretched out his left hand, which he could still use, and rested it awkwardly upon the dog's head.

"Rover," he muttered, "you'll stay with me. You'll stay with me till help comes. I'm ill, boy. Maybe I'm dying. I can't be left alone."

The dog thrust his nose into the man's hand and whined. Then he jumped up, putting his forepaws on the bed and licked at his master's face.

The man moved with difficulty to hold him off; then groaned at a stab of pain.

"Get down! Get down!" he said gently.

For more than an hour the old shepherd lay still, and the dog rested his shaggy head against his hand. The light slowly died out of the sky and the silence became complete

as the flies gathered upon the walls and ceiling of the hut and ceased to buzz. The sick man lay awkwardly upon one side as if twisted by pain. Half his body was paralysed, and the features on the right side of his face were drawn and motionless. From time to time he would give a low groan, and the dog, as if understanding his master's distress, would thrust his nose forward and give a whine of sympathy.

When it became dark, the shepherd with some difficulty managed to light the lantern that the horseman had placed by his bed. Then he reached for water, drank a little and offered some to the dog, who licked intelligently and gently at the rim of the cup. Then, exhausted by this effort, the man lay back with a sigh. For a while he watched the flickering shadows that the lantern cast on wall and ceiling, and all the while he spoke incessantly to the dog. He repeated himself, saying over the same thing again and again.

"You must stay with me, Rover. You must stay with me."

He spoke quickly and incoherently, and as he spoke the muscles of the left side of his face moved nervously. To go on speaking had now become a necessity. The idea obsessed him that he must not be silent, for a new-awakened fear was pressing upon his heart. He felt one side of his tongue and mouth to be becoming stiff, and he found it difficult to articulate. What if he should lose his power of speech?

That thought was terrible, and he babbled on, glad to assure himself that he still had the power of forming words.

The dog beside him whined in response and seemed to understand the fear which engendered that meaningless stream of sound. He jumped up and licked the man's face.

The shepherd muttered incessantly and watched the dog with eyes overflowing with tears. The dog, as if in an ecstasy of sympathy, raised himself and put his great paws on his master's chest. Then he howled, a long, sustained howl expressive of all that sorrow which can witness the suf-

fering of another but does not know how to lessen or alleviate that suffering.

After that, there was silence in the hut and the hours crept slowly by.

III

The man lay helpless, watching the great beast that loved him and suffered for him. Often their eyes met, but never for more than an instant, and then, as if embarrassed and ashamed at his master's weakness, the dog would look away, gaze uneasily into the corners of the hut and then hurriedly glance back again.

Then, as the shepherd watched his old friend and companion of many years, he saw a strange change come over him. He saw him stiffen his paws, saw the hair on his back rise up and bristle and saw his lips twitch and the whites of his eyes roll and shine. He remembered how he had once before seen him like that. It was years ago, when the dog was young. They had been together on a hillside and there was mist rising from the valley. He had been sitting by his sheep when the dog had suddenly bayed and had stood in just such an attitude gazing out over the valley and growling. Step by step he had come back to his master and then crouched against his legs shivering with terror. That was the coming of fear.

The two occasions were similar. Fear like a gust had struck the dog's heart, fear of the abnormal, fear, perhaps, of the hidden and inexorable cruelty of life. And the man, as he lay there helpless, understood and remembered, and he also became afraid.

To both man and dog something malevolent had been revealed. Inside that small hut life had suddenly shown itself naked and ruthless. Outside, where the grey saltbushes afforded cover to wallabies and night birds, existence was still, no doubt, the same, was still covered by that opaque veil that blinds and deceives; but within those walls there was madness, the madness of sudden understanding, the madness of fear.

The dog was now very still; he crouched close to his master, occasionally giving low growls. As the old shepherd watched him he felt the presence of something uncanny and distasteful. Now that his body was powerless, his mind swarmed with disquieting recollections of his earlier life, and particularly he remembered an incident that had happened in the hot months of a dry-season. The bush was parched with thirst and dead animals were a common sight. He had come one day upon a round mouse's nest, which lay exposed among the withered grass. On opening it he had found two starved mice. They were alive, but horribly thin; they moved their limbs slowly and senselessly; on their fur were patches of the yellow eggs of flies. He remembered how he had killed them and was horrified at his task. Now his dog reminded him of those mice. He remembered the pathetic savagery of their exposed yellow teeth.

Suddenly a cry sounded not very far distant.

To the man it was a message of hope. Help was coming! This nightmare of terror and isolation might pass!

He tried hard to articulate, to shout, but the cry that came from his lips was hardly audible.

He tried to raise himself, but failed and fell back, his muscles twitching uncontrollably.

In one leap the dog was on his feet. And now he was rigid, each foot seemed stiffly rooted to the ground. His back was arched, the hairs bristling and upright. His teeth were bared. All his savagery and fear showed in his eyes. If in the close confines of the hut there had been engendered madness and fear, savagery now came to join them. The ugliness of brute ferocity stood hunched upon four legs, rooted to the earth, bristling with terror.

Another shout sounded, this time nearer; then light footsteps were to be heard approaching. The dog quivered through his whole body. His lips, drawn back, exposed the long canine teeth. The door creaked on its hinges and was pushed slowly open. The doctor, fresh from all the mysterious beauty of a summer's night, stepped into the hut.

With stiff movements, like those of the starving mice,

the dog arched himself, lowered his head and tail and took short, cringing steps sideways and forward. Then with a snarl of fear and rage he leapt at the man's throat.

Dr. Laurence, who was for the moment slightly blinded by the lantern light, threw up his arm to guard his face. The dog's jaws fastened above his wrist and the strong teeth pressed their way through his coat and pierced the flesh. The first impact of the attack knocked him backwards and he was pinned against the wall of the hut. The sudden shock scattered for a moment all his thoughts, and for just a small fraction of time he was bewildered and almost helpless beneath the weight of the dog. The action of throwing up his arm to guard his throat had been instinctive rather than purposed. In the next instant, however, all his senses rallied and his mind was quick to take in the situation. The dog was, of course, guarding his sick master and his attack was not one of ignoble savagery, but merely an over-zealous loyalty.

The man's reason was able, even in the shock of those first few seconds, to take in the facts of the case. He could see that the shepherd was lying powerless on his bed; he could hear his hoarse and inarticulate whispers, and realised that the sick man could give no help and that he must cope with the dog singlehanded. He must struggle with him and throttle him off; and he would do so as humanely as possible, understanding as he did the loyal nature that prompted that mistaken savagery.

Steadying himself against the wall, he forced his adversary further from him and gripped at his shaggy throat with his left hand. He had to set his teeth hard against the pain which shot up his arm as the dog savagely shook his head from side to side.

With great difficulty he struggled and fought his way across the room. His purpose was to get the dog against the wall and there throttle him from his hold. This was difficult to accomplish, as the great beast struck out with his forefeet at the doctor's face. The man had to bend his head forward and duck it to one side to avoid these swift, savage strokes. It was thus that his face came close to

his enemy's. He saw the rolling whites of the dog's eyes, the bare pink gums and the writhing lips. The intense savagery of that expression was in some way strangely familiar and the light in the dog's eyes kindled the man's excitement, made his heart beat faster, and roused him to the highest animation of nervous force. He was by this time taking deep, short breaths through his nostrils, his lips were tight shut and his teeth locked. He was beginning to get angry at the sharp wrenches of pain that shot up his arm as the dog flung his weight from side to side.

At length he won his way to the opposite wall; his fingers were strongly gripped about the hot, pulsing throat. In spite of the pain in his arm, he held it high, and thrust with all his force against the wall. He watched the eyes of the dog open and shut in quick succession and heard his breath come in long, irregular gasps. He felt the grip on his arm relaxing, but just when he thought he had the beast powerless there was a sudden spasmodic movement, the dog struck upward with his hind legs, and, with a quick jerk, shook himself freee.

The doctor turned quickly to face him and at the same time looked round for a weapon. He saw the shepherd's staff standing in a far corner. The dog at once anticipated his thought and leapt between. They faced each other wary and alert. The man's former attitude of calm deliberation had left him. His activities were now all involved in the fierce struggle.

The eyes of both man and brute shone with anger and the muscles of the man's face twitched. Behind him he was vaguely conscious of the crippled shepherd blinking and inarticulate; round about him were the narrow walls of the hut which shut him in with that snarling grey devil. He stepped back towards the bed, hoping to lure the dog from his position and thus be able to reach the shepherd's staff. In an instant the dog was upon him, this time leaping for his thigh. Again they locked, but the dog's hold was not so tenacious. He bit and leapt free. The man cursed at the pain and ran in fiercely, striking with his fists.

The shepherd, who lay helpless on his bed, watched with horror the progress of the fight.

When, at first, he had seen the dog spring and the doctor ward off the attack, he had been filled with a pathetic and helpless distress. He was horrified that the man who had come those many miles to his aid should be thus outraged; and yet, though one word from him was all that was needed, he was powerless. He had struggled with all his failing powers to speak the necessary words, but all that he could do was to form an inarticulate and choking sound, which seemed to urge the dog to keener fury. That the doctor had so calmly withstood the first attack had given him some assurance; but now as they faced each other, angry man and angry brute in that small space, his spirit was touched with a new fear—a fear that was even stronger than the dread of his growing helplessness. He felt despair at the sudden revelation of the untamed fierceness of life, a fierceness that could even stretch out and envelop man himself, could strip from him his reason and could turn to frenzied cruelty the calm glance of his eye, and reveal the brute from which he was evolved.

The two creatures that in the small, dimly lighted room fought with such ferocity and cruelty were strangely similar in their movements and expression. Savagery, an intense interest and even a delight in the struggle, showed in every pose of the body, in every nervous contraction of the face. In the numbing terror of his own infirmity, the shepherd saw that they gloried in and enjoyed the naked fierceness of the fight. While he had lain there helplessly watching he had seen how the doctor's expression had changed from calm and manly determination to aroused, though controlled, anger; from anger to exasperation and rage; and then he had seen how rage had grown into the whining hysterical joy of conflict.

Two brutes fought in that room beside the crippled man. Motives of loyalty, generosity and mercy had prepared the way for the contest. Hidden and unsuspected forces, blind and cruel, had stripped first one, then the other of reason; and the mind, that had the knowledge and power to avert

that loosing of the bestial which lurks in all nature, was held ironically dumb. Man and dog, each in the grip of the mad excitement of killing, bit and struck at one another. Both were cunning at attack and parry. The dog, after the first furious onslaught, contented himself with sudden rushes, snapping bites and quick retreats; the man tried always to drive his adversary to some corner, where, gripping at his throat, he would be able to strangle him, crushing him with his greater weight. For what seemed an interminable time the dog was able to escape the swift, downward strokes of the man's fists or the sudden lift of his boots, and on each occasion that he sprang free he snapped fiercely at hands or legs, leaving the doctor bloody and torn, but in no way checked in that deliberate and relentless pursuit.

The shepherd's eyes, filled with his speechless fear, followed always the quick dash of onslaught and recovery. He had seen the human reason of the man's face shrink and become replaced by the passion of a brute. He was strangely affected by the sight; affected, too, by the knowledge that both of the combatants were now oblivious of his existence. He was cut off and alone; and all that was left of human dignity and restraint had found refuge in his powerless body and there hid in fear, unable to show themselves.

With an effort of mind, he could imagine the hushed stillness of the bush, that he knew so well, which stretched, grey and tranquil, in all directions. He could picture the outside view of his own hut. How often had he seen it as a small dark speck in the evening light? It had been full of pleasant associations and surrounded by recollections of comfortable evenings and meals hungrily enjoyed. But now within those walls raged a pandemonium of savagery and hate. They were filled by the abnormal, by such a ferocity as even beasts feared. For what beast of prey even does not look up full of shame after a savage act? It looks fearfully around and hurries away with its kill.

The sick man as he watched saw that a sudden change came over the fight, and instead of the quick movements

from side to side he could see that the doctor had caught the dog in a corner, had his hands at its throat and was crushing it under his weight. The shepherd watched with horror the look on the man's face. Exuberant, triumphant beast was there written large. There was cruel joy, the joy of mastery, the joy of killing. He looked at the dog's face and saw fear gleam in those fierce eyes. The eyes rolled from side to side, blinked horridly and then, with a despairing glance, looked at him. In them there was an appeal for help; and in that despairing look he recognised his friend and companion of many days and nights. His dog, his friend, was there helpless and dying. If he could speak he might wake the doctor from that horrid seizure of atrocious joy. If that were once broken the man would see there was no need to kill—the dog was done, played out.

With all his ebbing strength the shepherd lifted himself on his left elbow and with a desperate effort tried to shout. His heart seemed to be beating in his throat so that no breath could come, his tongue clicked helplessly, his eyes rolled, and, exhausted, he fell back.

As the doctor's fingers tightened in that final grip he understood for the first time in his life the joy of killing, the frank and shameless joy of the stronger which throttles what is weaker and less able to live—a sensation compelling and primitive. It was with supreme elation that he saw fear and defeat creep into the dog's eyes, and not till long after the breath had ceased to be drawn through the expanded nostrils did he relinquish his hold. That joy of killing as it died down gave place to a sudden knowledge of the surrounding quietness.

In spite of the hammering of his own blood in his ears and the short gasps of his own breath, he became conscious of a great stillness. And as the hammering became less insistent, the surrounding quiet seemed to creep in from the untamed, peaceful expanse of the Australian bush. It invaded the small dimensions of the hut and even seemed to force its way into his own brain. He loosed his grip and raised his hands to his face. The body of the dog fell

back with a thud. The man muttered something under his breath about having done for the brute, and was surprised at the sound of his own voice.

He looked round, again listening to the stillness. On the ground near the door he saw his bag of doctor's instruments. On the bed the shepherd lay very still. At that sight the doctor remembered the whole circumstance of his visit; how that the poor fellow had been paralysed, and he recollected with a shudder the look of agony in his eyes. That was when that damned brute had flown at him.

He shakily rose to his feet and again looked round. His arms and even his body were much bitten and he became conscious of pain.

He sucked at his torn hands, then for a time was motionless as if enchanted by the quiet of the night. He felt he must break that spell.

Deliberately and with conscious effort he walked across to the bed where the sick man lay. The shepherd's eyes, filled with horror and despair, stared glassily into his own. The doctor, as if to protect himself from that glance, covered them quickly with his hand. They did not flinch at his sudden movement. Mechanically, as if compelled by long habit, he bent his head to the man's chest, listening for the heartbeats. He could hear no sound. The silence of that desolate land was all-pervading.

THE LOST SUBURB

By J. D. Beresford

SO brilliant a memory must surely be that of a thing seen, and seen in a moment of tense emotion. Other memories of childhood are almost equally clear; little, bright pictures that present themselves without mental effort and awaken curious happiness for which I cannot account. In all these memories there is a sense of unreal reality that has a quality of ecstasy; I do so very truly live in those scenes, yet my body is apart from them; I am there unhampered by any weight of flesh. I can experience, but I am free. This past is new to me as no common sight or feeling of hitherto unknown life is ever new; unless it comes strangely, as a thing remembered.

The great difference between this and other memories is that this one I cannot place. The others, I know, are certainly of scenes and acts in which I played long ago. In the almost unbroken monotony of the long reasoning hours, when the dull machinery of the mind works with its usual recognition of faint or laboured effort, I can recall the plain, stupid facts. I know what took place before and after those scenes; I could write their history. The kind of history that is written: what people said or did, what they wore or how they looked. There is no ecstasy in that, only the repulsiveness of facts, and again facts, and of a landscape or a human being reasonably analysed.

To such commonplaces I, too, must descend in order to set out the story of my unplaced memory—that story which I cherish as a record of my soul's experience, however banal. Not that this is apparent, superficial banality is of the least account. The glorious truth for me is in the

knowledge that I have trespassed among the mysteries of the outer world, that I have crept through the interstices of matter and walked in the spaceless, timeless present of the universe. My soul has returned to me and said, " I am thyself."

'All this is proof to me and will be proof to none but me, but I put forward my three phases in order, ranging them in succession, at once chronological and logically sequential. So I come by way of memory and dream to the bald evidence of what we call reality.

I. Memory

It is so slight a thing, and yet to me so full of an inexplicable joy. I must have been absurdly young, so young that only this one emotional picture impressed me, and all the business of movement, purpose, and sequence of life that should circumscribe the vision is forgotten.

I was looking out from a moving window, and reason tells me that it was probably the window of a four-wheeled cab. My mother was frightened to death of hansoms.

I think it must have been my first visit to London, though no record of such a visit remains, and doubtless my childish mind was thrilled with the joy of adventure into the untraversed mysteries of the suburbs about the great city. Yet one wonders why the things that must have appeared so bizarre to me have been forgotten; the first impression of streets and traffic, of great shop-windows, or the vastness of titanic buildings, while this one scene, less unfamiliar, should be so vividly remembered.

It may be that my exhilaration had reached some climax, and that for a moment I was one with life; or it may be that that spot held some definite relation to myself, a relation imperfectly traced, which cannot be explained.

I hesitated on the verge of attempted description, knowing the inner joy to be indescribable. To me the old magic returns, but the place to all others must appear as a hundred other places.

I saw the right side of the road more clearly, but I must

have danced across the floor of the cab and seen a little of the left side, for I know something of that also, though less definitely. We were on the slope of a hill, and the houses on the right side stood above the level of the road. I could see little of the houses, however, for at the foot of their gardens was planted a thick row of balsam poplars—strong, healthy trees that were just come to full leaf and filled the air with their heavy-sweet perfume. The dusk was falling, and under the trees the shadows were so heavy that I could see nothing but the flicker of some white gate here and there. Then there was a break in the poplars. For ten yards, perhaps, came a low brick wall, coped with thin stone, and crowned with a poor iron rail carried on low cast-iron standards set far apart. The standards were cast in an ornamental shape, capped by a fleur-de-lys or some other misconception of the Early Victorian founders. A broken shrubbery of variegated laurel pushed discoloured leaves over and through the iron-work. The house I hardly saw; only one fact remains, it was chocolate-coloured. Perhaps I conceived that it was certainly built of chocolate. Then we were passing the poplars again, the heavily fragrant poplars that threw such deep shadows.

On the other side was a great wood, shut away from all discovery by a cliff of black fence incredibly high—higher than the roof of our monumental cab—and defended at the top by a row of vicious little crooked spikes, like capital T's with one arm broken away. In one place a pear-shaped bench of lilac overhung the fence. And all my memory of the picture goes to the sound of the crunch of new gravel and the rattling of a loose window.

That is all; little enough, and filled with no more romance than can be found in any other new suburb, spreading out to encroach later on the old estate which fronted and repelled it on the left side of my road. But to me it has some special quality that mountain, cliff, or sea can never hold; and when, probably twenty years later, I came to live in London, I set myself to find that spot which had left so deep an impression on me.

I was tireless in those days, and I explored the suburbs

from Catford to Barnet, from Leytonstone to Putney. Innumerable summer evenings I have spent in wandering happily through the wilderness of streets, bright and dull, that encircle the gloom of the essential London. And always as I went I was on the verge of the great discovery; the great hope was ever present with me that at the next turning I might find again my wonderland.

II. Dream

In another twenty years I had failed to find it, and then for the first time my soul went there in a dream.

The dream began with confusion and foolishness. I was making my way, absurdly, through houses and enclosed places, passing through rooms full of people, down passages, across yards and over walls, seeking some plain, open street where I might walk unharassed by fears of intrusion and trespass. Quite suddenly I found myself flying; and then, the confusion vanished, the dream steadied, I came into reality.

I was walking in a familiar place, under the shadow of balsam poplars—the bright new flags of the pavement were sticky in places with the varnish of spilled gum from the trees, and daintily littered with shed catkins. The road was spotlessly neat, as a toy road, its red gravel freshly rolled and unmarked by a single wheel-track. Across the way a high tarred fence ran unbroken up the hill, and behind the fence were tall forest trees, elm, oak, and beech, their little newly-green leaves in brilliant contrast with the blackness of an occasional fir.

A familiar place indeed to me; but in my dream I had no recollection of my childish visit. My associations were older than that.

Thus I came by unrealised steps to the break in the poplars.

The house that lay back behind the waist-high wall, with its useless iron railing, was grotesquely out of place. On either side of it were detached surburban villas, big, high-shouldered houses of red brick with stone dressings and

plain stone string courses—"blood bandages" we used to call the style in my architectural days.

The house behind the dwarf wall was an anachronism, a square box, flat-roofed and stumpy; and some fool had painted its stuccoed straightness a dark chocolate. The plainness of its dingy front was relieved only by the projection of a porch, equally dour and squat, with two dumpy, bulging columns supporting a weak entablature; some horrible Georgian conception of the Doric order. All the face of that stucco box was leprous as the trunk of a plane-tree, the little bow-legged columns were nearly bare.

The scrubby patch of grass and dandelions—hardly distinguishable from the weed-covered path—that lay between me and the house, contrasted no less sharply with the smooth lawns and bright flower-beds of its neighbours.

The road ran in a curve, the gardens tapered back from the pavement, the face of every house was set parallel with the tangent; and it seemed as if those ambitious villas on either hand turned a contemptuous shoulder to this square-browed little anachronism.

Square-browed and sulky it was, ashamed yet obstinately defiant, staring a resolute-eyed challenge at the prim ostentation of that smooth road of red gravel.

I was glad for the little house.

The road was deserted, the whole place silent as if one looked at the pictured thing rather than walked among the substance. But I was expecting some one, and presently he came, slinking furtive and apologetic from under the shadow of the scented poplars.

He wore a top-hat that showed in its weakest places a foundation of cardboard. His rusty frock-coat fitted him like a jersey, and the thick-soled boots below the fringe of his too-short grey trousers were the boots of a workman.

He nodded to me with a jerk of his head as he came out into the daylight, and fumbled with one dirty hand at his untidy beard.

"Still 'ere," he remarked. "We're clean forgot, that's what we are."

"No one comes along this road!" I said.

"Not with all the big 'ouses frontin' the other way," he added.

It was true. I had not noticed that, or I had forgotten it. One only saw the backs of those high-shouldered villas, ornamented though they were to turn some kind of a face to either road. Only my little house showed a front to this bright new gravel and the tall trees of the boarded estate.

And as the shabby man spoke to me, I heard for the first time a sound, very thin and far away, that came from the other side of the houses, the delicate, distant ring of voices and the tinkle of tiny laughter—but so remote, so infinitely removed from us.

" 'E's still alive," continued the shabby man, pointing to the chocolate house. "I seen 'im a few days since—lookin' out o' window 'e was. . . ."

Again my mind took up the idea submitted. I could recover nothing for myself, but every least suggestion enabled me to gather up again some lost thread.

He was still alive, the figure of mystery and terror, fit occupant for that strange house. Yet I had never been afraid of that apparition which appeared sometimes at the window, the man who wore some repulsive, disfiguring mask across his face. I had had confidence in him. But if I felt thus, why did I call him a figure of terror? I listened again to the shabby man. He had been rambling on while my thoughts were building.

He said something about the "children always peerin' and pryin' up the lane. . . ."

I smiled, and turned slightly away from him. I saw them coming now. The road was waking slowly to life. I saw a little huddled group, the familiar group of children coming slowly towards us, keeping close under the shadow of the poplars. A little girl of nine or ten was playing mother to them, keeping them back, spreading out her skirts, like a little hen to guard her inquisitive, peeping chickens. She wore sandals, and little frilled white trousers that came down to her ankles. As they drew timorously nearer, creep-

ing along the palings inch by inch, I could hear their sibilant whisperings, little cluckings and chirps of laughter, and half-smothered cries of affected terror.

Ah! to them he had been a figure of terror, though they could not restrain their curiosity, and, after all, they were safe. No one had ever known him to come out of the house.

As I watched the children, now drawing so near to us, I was on the verge of apprehension. Surely I knew that tall, thin child. I stared, and as I stared she and the others faded, and slipped from my comprehension. I knew they were still there, but I could no longer see or hear them. The whole scene about me had grown suddenly stiff and artificial, frozen and soundless; I had a sense of unreality and doubt. For one moment I fancied that I was flying again, and then I heard the thin, whining voice of the little shabby man, and came back to intensest realisation of my surroundings. The children had gone, but I could hear once more the tinkle of voices and little laughter beyond the houses.

"Over fifteen year, now, since he first come . . ." the little man was saying.

I had heard some one say that before. The memory of it was associated quite distinctly with the smell of the balsam poplars. But I dared not attempt to recall the circumstances. The shock I had just received had left me with the knowledge of my double consciousness. I must remain placed in the sense of my happiness; any effort of mind or conscious stimulation of idea would drag me back to my other life. I looked down at the pavement and gently rolled a green catkin to and fro under my foot. I listened attentively once more to the garrulous little man. I understood that he was glad to have some one to talk to. This was a lonely, unused road.

". . . 'Aven't seen the little chap for the past day or two," he rambled on; "laid up again very like. . . ."

My heart leapt, and I repeated to myself, "calm, tranquil happiness." I rolled the catkin backwards and forwards under my foot. I knew of whom he was speaking now, and for an instant I had the sense of looking up to the face

of the little man before me—I, who was nearly a foot taller than he.

"Very delicate," I suggested.

The little man shook his head sadly. "Can't live," he said, paused, and then repeated with morbid enjoyment, "Can't live. 'E's got the look."

I could not compose myself. The struggle had begun again, the effort to recall the past. I looked down at the catkin I had released, and saw that my leg was bare and that I had on my foot a white sock and a black round-toed slipper; across the instep was a strap that fastened with a little round black button. I looked up quickly, and the shabby man had vanished. I was not afraid, but I was desperately eager to stay where I was. I reached up and grasped the iron rail on the low wall. I had to stand on tip-toe to reach the rail, and even as I grasped it, it rose high in the air, carrying me with it. I swung at giddy heights, and once looking down, I saw that the whole sky was ablaze with sunset. I could not bear to look down into that hot flame, and swung over on my back, still holding tight to the rail. Something was remorselessly calling me out of the depths of time, and I began to fall through enormous spaces. Gradually I lost all sense of movement. I was lying on my back staring at some huge white expanse. My arms were still above my head, gripping the iron rail that crowned the wall of the chocolate house. I was, in fact, in bed staring at the ceiling, and the rail was the rail of my bed. I knew that I had been lying intensely still. Even now I could not move.

The door opened, and an untidy head was pushed in.

"I've called yer three times a'ready," said the lodging-house servant. "It's past nine o'clock."

III. Reality.

I did not go to the office that morning. I was too excited and too contemptuous of the meanness of life. I had had transcendental experience. I was exalted, superbly stirred and proud.

The glamour of that wonderful vision was still upon me, and I went out to find my lost suburb. I knew that I should find it that morning.

And to me, as I have said, the evidence is convincing, despite certain aggravating discrepancies which must, inevitably, I am afraid, induce doubt in other minds.

It was in southwest London, but I shall not indicate the precise locality. What use is it for people to go and stare at the outside of commonplace houses, as if some murder had been committed or some ghost seen there?

Even I had no thrill when I found the place; it was all so changed. The estate behind the tall black fence has all been cut up into trim streets of villas, of meaner pretension than that one crescent of comparatively large houses, which, by the way, are not letting well, although they are not nearly so large and imposing as I had imagined. The chocolate house has disappeared, but I can mark the place where it stood, because there is one house in the crescent which is narrower and smaller than the others. It matches the others in style and faces the same way, turning its white-streaked back to the meaner villas on the estate, but it has no poplars in its garden. The other poplars, however, were disappointing. They were thinner, many of them have died, no doubt; and those that remain have been pollarded and formalised. Moreover, it was late summer when I went, and they had lost their fragrance.

I shall not go there again; my suburb is lost, now, forever.

If this were all, I should have a poor case, I admit; but I have better evidence than this, although there is some confusion of time which I cannot explain.

I had little difficulty in finding the house-agents, their boards leaned disreputably over many of the palings, thrusting their statements of eligibility at the road.

The young man in the spruce, bare office, however, was no use to me directly. His memory carried him back no further than a paltry three years, and his firm had only been established for seven.

He offered me keys and orders to view, and plainly re-

garded me with suspicion when I told him that I wanted to find out when one of the houses in the crescent was built.

"All modern requirements," he said, "bath, hot water. . . ."

"But surely," I interrupted him, "the houses in the crescent are not quite modern. They must have been there," I hesitated and then plunged, "at least seventy years." I thought of the little girl in the Early Victorian trousers and sandals.

The clerk pursed his mouth and shook his head. "Well, I can't say for certain," he said, "but I shouldn't think they'd been up as long as that. Anyway, they're all fitted with bath-rooms now, hot water upstairs, and every . . ."

"I don't want to take a house," I protested. "I'm sorry if I'm wasting your time, but I have a particular interest in one house, 'The Limes,' I think you called it. I—I—knew some one who lived there once."

"Sorry I can't be of any assistance," returned the clerk coldly. He had plainly lost any interest in me, and he had never had much.

But as I turned to go out of the office he became human for a moment. "You're sure you don't want to take a house in the crescent?" he asked. "The Limes," it seemed, was not to be let.

"Quite sure," I said, convincingly.

He hesitated, and then said: "Because if it's only information you want, there's old Hankin in the High Street, No. 69, a rival firm, of course, and if you were thinking of taking a house, you'd better come to us, but . . ."

I thanked him, and hurried away to find old Hankin.

His office was a small and dingy place, and old Hankin was a man of fifty-five or so; he wore a grey beard and spectacles. He was evidently not busy, but he regarded me with the professional distrust of the house-agent. I had some difficulty in breaking through his suspicion of the potential leaseholder.

"'The Limes,'" he said at last, looking at me over his spectacles, "was built about thirty years ago, just before I came into the business."

"You don't remember the house that stood there before?" I asked.

He pinched up his under lip between his finger and thumb, and continued to regard me very earnestly above his spectacles. "Making inquiries?" he asked, and his tone gave the phrase a technical savour.

"Only on my own behalf," I said. "I have heard rather a curious story of the place." I wished I could tell him the truth, but it was impossible. He, most assuredly, would never have believed me; so unreal is the world of fact.

He dropped quite unexpectedly into the confidential. "You see," he said, "I left 'ome when I was fifteen—ran away to sea." The ghost of a smile came into his eyes at the amazing thought that once he, old Hankin, the house-agent, had run away to sea.

I curbed my impatience—it was the only way. I allowed him to ramble on, pricking him with assumed interest and an occasional question, till I brought him home at the age of twenty-seven, to a forgiving father in the house and estate agency business.

"And I suppose your father would remember the old house that stood in the crescent before 'The Limes' was built?" I prompted him.

He nodded. "He had some story about that 'ouse, if I remember right," said old Hankin.

I waited, breathless.

"It was an old 'ouse as was burnt down," he went on, "but the story was about some queer customer as used to live there, back in the 'forties—before I was born, that was." He took off his spectacles and made a business of wiping them and peering at the glasses.

I looked my interest.

"I dunno whether the old man dreamt it or not, but he used to tell as the occupier was a hermit or a miser or what not, and was wanted for some old debt. Shut hisself up in the 'ouse, so the old man used to say, and never put his 'ead out o' doors by daylight for fear of distraint. Free'old, the 'ouse was. There wasn't no road at the back then—what's now the front, of course—and only the lane,

Granger's Lane, on the other side. The 'ouses in the crescent was built in 'seventy-nine."

"You're sure of that?" I asked.

He nodded. "We got the plans in the office somewhere," he said, and looked round at the muddle about him a little helplessly.

"Never mind about the plans," I soothed him. "Was there any more about that miser in the old house?"

He wrinkled his forehead. "There *was* something amusin' about him," he answered, "but I forget the rights of it. To the best o' my recollection, the old debt as I was referring to had been given up long ago by the creditors, but there was some old bailiff or debt collector who'd been offered a commission on recovery, and he was the only one who remembered it. Used to hang about the place in the evenin's sometimes after his ordinary work. Something o' that kind. The old man used to make a story of it, I know, but 'e's been dead this twenty year."

That was all I could get out of old Hankin, and so far I have not been able to corroborate a single other detail.

. . . . . .

Now that all the essential facts have been put on paper, I am moved by a sense of impatience. I lived for a time on such a high plane of emotion, I was so sure that inspiration had been given to me; but now, as I examine the evidence, coldly and reasonably, a doubt insinuates itself, some reflex of the doubt that I anticipated in other minds before I began to write.

There was certainly some confusion of time in my dream. Those large villas were not built, nor the ground cleared when that odd little speculating bailiff used to take his evening patrol in the hope of one day being able to serve the writ he doubtless carried in the breast-pocket of that tightly-fitting frock-coat. They were not built when those children crept, giggling and half-scared, under the shadow of the poplars, nor when that one little boy, who was not afraid and who was so sure to die, walked—who knows?—into the very garden, perhaps even into the house itself. That

thought sets me trembling with wonder and eagerness again. If I could but dream once more, and remember if I was ever inside the house. . . .

I grant the confusion, but on that plane of being, after all, time is not, and my own childish vision of the place in this life—the houses were newly-built then—may have created on that other plane a setting which, according to our measure, was an anachronism.

One further point I am very loth to cede: the question of my fragrant poplars. According to Aiton, *P. balsamifera* was introduced into England at the end of the seventeenth century, and it is now commonly grown in suburbs; but is it likely to have been found on waste ground in 1840? I can only say that it is not impossible. I do not know that there may not have been older houses fronting Granger's Lane, before the villas came.

I end where I began by saying that the memory, the dream, and my subsequent investigations are evidence to me, if they carry no weight with others. The vision has come to me and left me changed. I have touched a higher plane of being, and all my old materialistic doubts are gone, never to return. This one thing I have learned, and to that I shall always be able to hold: Reality lies within ourselves, not in the things about us.

THE BIRTH OF AN ARTIST[1]

By Hugh De Sélincourt

I

A VERY old man, a Mr. Venables, sat with some friends who were talking together, a Mr. and Mrs. Plummer, their daughter and two men. Mrs. Plummer was a very kind-hearted woman and made a point of asking Mr. Venables to dinner at least once every month—quite informally. One of the men had been at an aviation meeting and had seen a fatal accident. He described a thrill that was visible through the whole crowd as the monstrous machine started off along the ground and rose into the air, bearing a man up into the sunshine.

The old man was listening, but leaned forward to listen when the narrator said: "He was making a huge circle in the air. An exhibition flight, you know. In following him with my glasses, I covered some swallows flying too. It somehow made me laugh." In the remainder of the story Mr. Venables did not seem to take so much interest as he had taken in the swallows.

After the hush which followed the tragic end, Mrs. Plummer said: "Oh! why do they do it?" And the other man said: "What a splendid death to die." And the old man said to himself, "Death is always splendid."

But the narrator heard him and objected: "That depends when you die and how you die." To which Mr. Venables answered: "Oh yes, sad, distressing, and all that—but the fact of death is splendid," and he settled in his chair, declining argument.

[1] From "Nine Tales." By permission of Dodd, Mead and Company.

It passed through the girl's mind that perhaps it was well such a very old man did think so, under the circumstances. And the thought appearing horrid to her, she hurried across the room to put a cushion behind his back. He smiled thanks and took hold of her wrists. When he smiled you saw the meaning of the deep wrinkles round his eyes and mouth: a frown puts the finish to some faces, a smile to others.

"At my age," he said softly, "I ought to be friends with death, eh?"

The girl flushed. The old man said in a louder voice: "Hoo, I'd be friends with age if I could make you young beggars feel the truth of what I know."

He withdrew again into his arm-chair and the girl sat down, frightened to think how awful it must be to grow old, and glad to think that that misfortune was still remote from her. Mr. Venables started forward. "If only when one was young one could bravely grasp the fact of age and death or of death without age—instead of shrinking and shrinking and shelving the idea as morbid or horrid or . . ." The pendulous skin on his face trembled with his keenness. One hand was clenched so that the veins on the back of it stood out like blue silk cords of various thickness. But he noticed the polite patience of his listeners, and pushed himself back into his chair. "Well, there'd be no more slackness or indifference," he wound up, rubbing his hands apologetically.

"Si jeunesse savait, si vieillesse pouvait," commented the other man. He was good-looking, with a neat moustache. The old man pouted out his lips.

"It's all in trim enough little mottoes," he grumbled. "Saving your presence, dear, I should be inclined to add: Damn them: the glib little mottoes, the trim little dogmas. They're conductors to prevent people feeling the shock of great unpleasant burning truths. The shock would be the making of most people."

"You ought not to excite yourself, now, Mr. Venables, really you oughtn't," said Mrs. Plummer. She was naturally rather nervous about him after what the doctor had

said, and relieved every time she saw him drive safely away in his four-wheeler. The old fellow thrust out his lips again. He looked at the clock. It was a quarter to ten. He never left till ten. Habits like that were dear to him. He was conscious that he had overweighted the conversation and was sorry. He remembered that he often did now and was sorrier.

"Go on about the swallows," he growled, smiling.

"Oh, the swallows. Yes."

"Takes an aeroplane to make 'em realise the wonder of flight," he continued jovially to growl. "And a smash before a gaping crowd the wonder of death."

"To think that little birds can fly and we can't," said Mrs. Plummer kindly, to fill in the pause. "Like little people flying, if one only knew."

What she wished to know remained vague.

"Little people flying. Hoo! I often see 'em." He looked mischievously round. He would have given a great deal to make them pay him less courtesy and more attention. That look of kindly patience was the worst penalty his age exacted. "I constantly see 'em. They just stop to tell me to mind my own business and be jolly. And they're off."

No one spoke. He got only the indulgent smile which sent the years closing down over his head. He stood up, trying to stoop as little as his back and neck would let him.

"Oh, you're not going?" someone said. Of which he took no notice.

"I still like bread and dripping," he announced. "And what's more, I still insist on having bread and dripping for lunch, as I used to when I ate slices of it under the nursery table. Then I howled for it. Now I ask for it. That's the main difference between a baby and an old man. That and a little knowledge I've picked up between-whiles, and —the fact—that I'm friends with death now and I wasn't then. Until you're friends with death, young people, you can never love or live. You can only maunder. I don't blame you for disliking old age. It's uncomfortable. Between me and you the connection's cut, as it usually is

with your preposterous telephones. Never mind. I'm off now."

And he wrapped himself up and went away. The others, immediately after his going, produced the bridge table, and cut for partners and the deal. The man who won the deal said, as he dealt, "Poor old chap: he addresses each one of us as though we were mankind." Another said: "An amusing old bird." The third said: "Rather a trial, I should think, to his family." And the fourth said: "Oh, he has none now." The dealer, looking keenly at his cards, remarked: "He always goes at ten." He frowned harder over his cards and, with a sigh, said: "Yes. I'll do it. Hearts."

"Shall I play to hearts, partner?"

"Please."

And silence reigned for the game. The girl had gone to bed.

II

Old Mr. Venables lived on the first floor of a house in Upper Baker Street. Mrs. Gorton, the landlady, was the widow of a man who had been Mr. Venable's foreman in the printing business he had sold nearly twenty years ago. She met him in the hall.

"Not out with your son, then?" he said.

"No, sir, they dined here and went alone. At my age I like serious plays where it's all talking, not these musical plays."

"Fifth anniversary of his wedding?"

"No, sir, sixth."

"Dear me! The years pass, Mrs. Gorton, the years pass."

"They do, sir," Mrs. Gorton cheerfully acquiesced. "Good night."

He went upstairs slowly. Stairs tried his knees, now.

He remembered how Gorton—dead now—came to him, blushing and grinning, to speak about an order, and turned back at the door to touch his forehead with his forefinger and say, "It's a boy, sir. Six-thirty this morning." He

remembered his own marriage, the birth of his two children, their death, his wife's death; and then suddenly all the years since his schooldays were wiped from his mind. He so vividly remembered his first school cricket match that it seemed impossible he should be finding it arduous just to walk up a few stairs. When he was eighteen, people used to think it marvellous how fast he ran. Now that he was eighty people thought it marvellous how well he got about at all. At the top of the stairs he stopped a few moments to rest his knees. They were aching. He pushed his hat on the back of his head and shook himself. Then he went into his room. His room was full of books. The lamp stood lighted on the table. He put his hat and stick on the table and began to pull off his overcoat, which he threw on the sofa—a lodging-house sofa on which he used to put anything, but himself. He looked round at his books and rubbed his hands. There was a gleam in his eyes as he leaned against his bookcase, and, lifting first one foot, then the other, pushed off his boots from the heel. His boots were specially designed for their ease of assumption and withdrawal. They were shelters. Everything about him no longer typified attack, but resistance.

However, he smiled round on his books as on great friends, and trod gently into his slippers. He loved fat folios. His eye lingered on North's *Plutarch, Don Quixote, Tristram Shandy, The Faerie Queene*—he must read a special favourite that evening. He suspected it would be *The Faerie Queene,* but chose to delay the final choice.

"Eh! old lads," he said: he often talked and chuckled to himself. "I'm myself with you. With others, somehow . . . Hoo! there's always been an *if*. Eh, you catch on? If she didn't do this or if he didn't do that, what friends I'd have been with 'em."

He was turning the pages of his *Plutarch,* almost fondling them as he smoothed out the leaves.

"They know how to fly and rush about in motors: they've telephones and telegraphs. They know about so many things. But about *the* thing. About life. I could teach 'em a bit. I haven't tho', I haven't. A dumb man. Cantankerous be-

cause I couldn't even amuse 'em. Just to make 'em realise death, say. You'd send 'em spinning on towards life and love and things that matter. Exploiting their own natures towards kindness. With proper values. Heigh ho! I'd like to start again and do a little better."

He put his North back into the shelf.

"Is it just those good Plummers, do you think, I'm ill at ease with, or everyone? It's they who ought, you know, to be eager to reform the world. Not me. I ought to be playing my quiet game of whist. Not them. Like some growth in me, this desire to say things. A late growth. Too late a growth. Hair grows on a dead man's face. This shoots up in my mind."

He did not know, being alone, whether he was speaking or whether he was thinking. Often, too, he didn't know whether he was thinking or dreaming. He passed from one state to the other too easily for the transition to be remarkable. He took down his Spenser, a heavy volume, and carried it in his arms across the room to his chair.

"For the last time. Each act of mine may be. Who knows? Just got a bit level with all you great fellows, just wanting to start a little on my own. Time's up. The whistle goes. Time's up. You've been too slow in starting, my boy. That's all. A little too slow in starting."

He began to read the *Faerie Queene* in the middle of the page at which the book opened. The words and rhythm, to whose influence he was more sensitive than he had ever been, took him away where the *Faerie Queene* always took him, and his spirits responded to the springy moss of an enormous forest. His feet, too, almost, though he kept shuffling them more comfortably back into his slippers. The weight of the book on his knees pressed his toes forward. He read on until he began to doze. His head nodded and he caught himself dozing.

"Now, then," he said, "no time to lose, you've not," and he hitched the book up on his knee and sat as upright as he could.

"Sleep. You'll have your fill of that, my boy. Soon enough," he growled, as he arranged himself.

But his head began to nod again. His back relaxed into the chair. The book lowered on his knee; the hand that held it loosened. He must have fallen asleep.

III

The lamp still burned. It was his own familiar chair. The *Faerie Queene* was on his knee. All his surroundings were unchanged. And yet . . . She was still there. So he repeated his question.

"My sweet little Miss, who are you?"

And the same thing happened again. The strange little child spirit-person sent his last word back on him like an echo. "You."

The extraordinary clearness of her face—its gravity and roundness—fought the extraordinary fact of her presence and easily won. The little fear there was just spiced his pleasure. His first astonishment yielded, and he looked at her more carefully. "I couldn't be frightened," he thought, "even if I wasn't asleep."

What he chiefly wondered was how she could possibly look so strong and substantial as she did, when quite obviously her body was not fashioned of flesh, but of some stuff like that from which primrose leaves are made.

"Where do you come from?" he asked vaguely.

"From the open," came the answer.

"Well, it's very nice of you to have come. But you stand there. Troubled? What can I do?" His words made no impression on her grave steady look. "Heavenly to see you. But you see, it's nice for people to feel at home with one. However they come."

"Here?" He wasn't sure whether she spoke in pretty scorn or whether it was his own thought, become articulate, of the unfitness of the dingy room to be a home for a little person of her build and beauty.

She continued to look at him. She was evidently as perplexed at seeing him as he was at seeing her. Her perplexity tickled him. So he said:

"It's all very well, you know, but this is my room and

I am just a very old man, a Mr. Venables; whereas you—what are you?"

And again the word came back on him from her. "You." But this time there was a frown on her face and a tremble. The same look comes on the face of a small child about to cry. She didn't cry, however, and still searched into him with her round grey eyes. Then suddenly they brightened. Have you ever been looking at roses when the sun had gleamed out on them? It was like that. Only the light came from within and glowed deeplier.

"It's all right," she said. "I've not made a mistake. I see you at last inside all that stuffy covering. Come on!"

Her voice was like the music of a stream which took on meaning a little after the first sound touched him. Its beauty seemed to set something in him struggling to be free, like a child in its mother's womb. And as though she saw this, the little spirit-person laughed and said, "Come on!"

"Diaphenia like the daffadowndilly, do tell me who you are."

"I didn't know it would be so difficult. How am I to get you free from all that rubbish?"

"Tell me. Perhaps I could help you. Tell me who you are, for instance."

"I've told you. I'm you. All the kind living thoughts from you have become me, of course. And I've been sent to fetch you."

The old man shook his head. "That couldn't be. The unkind living thoughts. There'd be a black monster coming. I suspect you're just the Faerie Queene."

"There's me and there are things that smell like dead leaves and make rubbish. Brains like brambles in a thicket. Do come! I can't take all that. And we've got to pass on."

"How and where?"

"Come, and you'll see."

The something in him stirred more resolutely at the appeal in her voice.

"Oh! you are getting free," she cried.

"Anywhere with you."

It struggled and tore within the old man, so that he was

frightened and could hardly speak. He tried to smile. The little spirit-person moved upon him. Delight shone from her face. "You're mine," she cried. He no longer saw her. She was so near him. She was a part of him. He thought she must have kissed his soul.

"Ha! Ha! we're free of the ugly rubbish. Whole and free."

The voice sang within him.

IV

Agony was on the face of the very old man, Mr. Venables, as he sat in his chair, his eyes unshut—the agony of the last effort. He sprang to his feet and stood more erect than he had for many years. There were drops of sweat on his forehead. He fell on his knees. His hands were clenched. He tried to raise them and cry out:

"And—men—fear—death!"

He felt that the sound of his words crashed through the room and out into the world, so that all men must surely hear and heed their meaning: words written in a flame on the sky, and shouted in a laugh of thunder.

But as a matter of fact his voice only whispered, the corners of his mouth only twitched, and he fell forward in a heap on the floor. His arm fell on the fire-irons, and they made such a clatter that Mrs. Gorton, who never went to bed early, came up to see what was the matter. She tapped, and receiving no response to her tapping, opened the door and came in. She hurried towards him: then stopped midway with a gasp and hurried back. Six doors up the street a doctor lived. She fetched him.

The doctor straightened Mr. Venables out on the floor, and felt his pulse: then he put his hand on Mr. Venables's heart.

"Poor old gentleman," he said. "Quite dead."

They stood looking very solemnly, first at each other, then at the body. The doctor said: "Not heavy. I think we can manage it."

So they carried it into the bedroom and laid it on Mr.

Venables's bed. The doctor helped Mrs. Gorton undress it and put on it a clean nightshirt. They left it between the sheets of the bed.

After the doctor went, Mrs. Gorton drank a glass of cold water, because she felt rather sick, and telephoned to Mr. Plummer.

Mr. Plummer was just finishing his rubber, and thought it advisable not to shock his wife with the sad news that night. But he was quite as kind-hearted as his wife, and cheerfully undertook all the trouble of the body's disposal, though he knew that the money left him would be hardly sufficient to cover his last year's losses at cards, of which he kept careful note.

Mrs. Gorton did not like to be alone in the house with a corpse. She found there was ample time to meet her son and his wife at the station and go with them to their flat in Balham to sleep. So she left the gas on the glimmer in the bedroom, where the very old body lay stiffening between the white sheets, and very wisely went.

A SICK COLLIER[1]

By D. H. Lawrence

SHE was too good for him, everybody said. Yet still she did not regret marrying him. He had come courting her when he was only nineteen, and she twenty. He was in build what they call a tight little fellow; short, dark, with a warm colour, and that upright set of the head and chest, that flaunting way in movement recalling a mating bird, which denotes a body taut and compact with life. Being a good worker he had earned decent money in the mine, and having a good home had saved a little.

She was a cook at "Uplands," a tall, fair girl, very quiet. Having seen her walk down the street, Horsepool had followed her from a distance. He was taken with her, he did not drink, and he was not lazy. So, although he seemed a bit simple, without much intelligence, but having a sort of physical brightness, she considered, and accepted him.

When they were married they went to live in Scargill Street, in a highly respectable six-roomed house which they had furnished between them. The street was built up the side of a long, steep hill. It was narrow and rather tunnel-like. Nevertheless, the back looked out over the adjoining pasture, across a wide valley of fields and woods, in the bottom of which the mine lay snugly.

He made himself gaffer in his own house. She was unacquainted with a collier's mode of life. They were married on a Saturday. On the Sunday night he said:

"Set th' table for my breakfast, an' put my pit-things

[1] From "The Prussian Officer." By permission of B. W. Huebsch.

afront o' th' fire. I s'll be gettin' up at ha'ef pas' five. Tha nedna shift thysen not till when ter likes."

He showed her how to put a newspaper on the table for a cloth. When she demurred:

"I want none o' your white cloths i' th' mornin'. I like ter be able to slobber if I feel like it," he said.

He put before the fire his moleskin trousers, a clean singlet, or sleeveless vest of thick flannel, a pair of stockings and his pit boots, arranging them all to be warm and ready for morning.

"Now tha sees. That wants doin' ivery night."

Punctually at half-past five he left her, without any form of leave-taking, going downstairs in his shirt.

When he arrived home at four o'clock in the afternoon his dinner was ready to be dished up. She was startled when he came in, a short, sturdy figure, with a face indescribably black and streaked. She stood before the fire in her white blouse and white apron, a fair girl, the picture of beautiful cleanliness. He "clommaxed" in, in his heavy boots.

"Well, how 'as ter gone on?" he asked.

"I was ready for you to come home," she replied tenderly. In his black face the whites of his brown eyes flashed at her.

"An' I wor ready for comin'," he said. He planked his tin bottle and snap-bag on the dresser, took off his coat and scarf and waistcoat, dragged his arm-chair nearer the fire and sat down.

"Let's ha'e a bit o' dinner, then—I'm about clammed," he said.

"Aren't you goin' to wash yourself first?"

"What am I to wesh mysen for?"

"Well, you can't eat your dinner——"

"Oh, strike a daisy, Missis! Dunna I eat my snap i' th' pit wi'out weshin'?——forced to."

She served the dinner and sat opposite him. His small bullet head was quite black, save for the whites of his eyes and his scarlet lips. It gave her a queer sensation to see him open his red mouth and bare his white teeth as he ate.

His arms and hands were mottled black; his bare, strong neck got a little fairer as it settled towards his shoulders, reassuring her. There was the faint indescribable odour of the pit in the room, an odour of damp, exhausted air.

"Why is your vest so black on the shoulders?" she asked.

"My singlet? That's wi' th' watter droppin' on us from th' roof. This is a dry un as I put on afore I come up. They ha'e gre't clothes-'osses, an' as we change us things, we put 'em on theer ter dry."

When he washed himself, kneeling on the hearth-rug stripped to the waist, she felt afraid of him again. He was so muscular, he seemed so intent on what he was doing, so intensely himself, like a vigorous animal. And as he stood wiping himself, with his naked breast towards her, she felt rather sick, seeing his thick arms bulge their muscles.

They were nevertheless very happy. He was at a great pitch of pride because of her. The men in the pit might chaff him, they might try to entice him away, but nothing could reduce his self-assured pride because of her, nothing could unsettle his almost infantile satisfaction. In the evening he sat in his arm-chair chattering to her, or listening as she read the newspaper to him. When it was fine, he would go into the street, squat on his heels as colliers do, with his back against the wall of his parlour, and call to the passers-by, in greeting, one after another. If no one were passing, he was content just to squat and smoke, having such a fund of sufficiency and satisfaction in his heart. He was well married.

They had not been wed a year when all Brent and Wellwood's men came out on strike. Willy was in the Union, so with a pinch they scrambled through. The furniture was not all paid for, and other debts were incurred. She worried and contrived, he left it to her. But he was a good husband; he gave her all he had.

The men were out fifteen weeks. They had been back just over a year when Willy had an accident in the mine, tearing his bladder. At the pit head the doctor talked of the hospital. Losing his head entirely, the young collier

raved like a madman, what with pain and fear of hospital.

"Tha s'lt go whoam, Willy, tha s'lt go whoam," the deputy said.

A lad warned the wife to have the bed ready. Without speaking or hesitating she prepared. But when the ambulance came, and she heard him shout with pain at being moved, she was afraid lest she should sink down. They carried him in.

"Yo' should 'a' had a bed i' th' parlour, Missis," said the deputy, "then we shouldna ha' had to hawkse 'im upstairs, an' it 'ud 'a' saved your legs."

But it was too late now. They got him upstairs.

"They let me lie, Lucy," he was crying, "they let me lie two mortal hours on th' sleck afore they took me outer th' stall. Th' peen, Lucy, th' peen; oh, Lucy, th' peen, th' peen!"

"I know th' pain's bad, Willy, I know. But you must try an' bear it a bit."

"Tha munna carry on in that form, lad, thy missis'll niver be able ter stan' it," said the deputy.

"I canna 'elp it, it's th' peen, it's th' peen," he cried again. He had never been ill in his life. When he had smashed a finger he could look at the wound. But this pain came from inside, and terrified him. At last he was soothed and exhausted.

It was some time before she could undress him and wash him. He would let no other woman do for him, having that savage modesty usual in such men.

For six weeks he was in bed, suffering much pain. The doctors were not quite sure what was the matter with him, and scarcely knew what to do. He could eat, he did not lose flesh, nor strength, yet the pain continued, and he could hardly walk at all.

In the sixth week the men came out in the national strike. He would get up quite early in the morning and sit by the window. On Wednesday, the second week of the strike, he sat gazing out on the street as usual, a bullet-headed young man, still vigorous-looking, but with a peculiar expression of hunted fear in his face.

"Lucy," he called, "Lucy!"

She, pale and worn, ran upstairs at his bidding.

"Gi'e me a han'kercher," he said.

"Why, you've got one," she replied, coming near.

"Tha nedna touch me," he cried. Feeling his pocket, he produced a white handkerchief.

"I non want a white un, gi'e me a red un," he said.

"An' if anybody comes to see you," she answered, giving him a red handkerchief.

"Besides," she continued, "you needn't ha' brought me upstairs for that."

"I b'lieve th' peen's commin' on again," he said, with a little horror in his voice.

"It isn't, you know it isn't," she replied. "The doctor says you imagine it's there when it isn't."

"Canna I feel what's inside me?" he shouted.

"There's a traction-engine coming downhill," she said. "That'll scatter them.—I'll just go an' finish your pudding."

She left him. The traction-engine went by, shaking the houses. Then the street was quiet, save for the men. A gang of youths from fifteen to twenty-five years old were playing marbles in the middle of the road. Other little groups of men were playing on the pavement. The street was gloomy. Willy could hear the endless calling and shouting of men's voices.

"Tha'rt skinchin'!"

"I arena!"

"Come 'ere with that blood-alley."

"Swop us four for't."

"Shonna, gie's hold on't."

He wanted to be out, he wanted to be playing marbles. The pain had weakened his mind, so that he hardly knew any self-control.

Presently another gang of men lounged up the street. It was pay morning. The Union was paying the men in the Primitive Chapel. They were returning with their half-sovereigns.

"Sorry!" bawled a voice. "Sorry!"

The word is a form of address, corruption probably of "Sirrah." Willy started almost out of his chair.

"Sorry!" again bawled a great voice. "Art goin' wi' me to see Notts play Villa?"

Many of the marble players started up.

"What time is it? There's no treens, we s'll ha'e ter walk."

The street was alive with men.

"Who's goin' ter Nottingham ter see th' match?" shouted the same big voice. A very large, tipsy man, with his cap over his eye, was calling.

"Com' on—aye, com' on!" came many voices. The street was full of the shouting of men. They split up in excited cliques and groups.

"Play up, Notts!" the big man shouted.

"Plee up, Notts!" shouted the youths and men. They were at kindling pitch. It only needed a shout to rouse them. Of this the careful authorities were aware.

"I'm goin', I'm goin'!" shouted the sick man at his window.

Lucy came running upstairs.

"I'm goin' ter see Notts play Villa on th' Meadows ground," he declared.

"You—*you* can't go. There are no trains. You can't walk nine miles."

"I'm goin' ter see th' match," he declared, rising.

"You know you can't. Sit down now an' be quiet."

She put her hand on him. He shook it off.

"Leave me alone, leave me alone. It's thee as ma'es th' peen come, it's thee. I'm goin' ter Nottingham to see th' football match."

"Sit down—folks'll hear you, and what will they think?"

"Come off'n me. Com' off. It's her, it's her as does it. Com' off."

He seized hold of her. His little head was bristling with madness, and he was strong as a lion.

"Oh, Willy!" she cried.

"It's 'er, it's 'er. Kill her!" he shouted, "kill her."

"Willy, folks'll hear you."

"Th' peen's commin' on again, I tell yer. Ill kill her for it."

He was completely out of his mind. She struggled with him to prevent his going to the stairs. When she escaped from him, who was shouting and raving, she beckoned to her neighbour, a girl of twenty-four, who was cleaning the window across the road.

Ethel Mellor was the daughter of a well-to-do checkweighman. She ran across in fear to Mrs. Horsepool. Hearing the man raving, people were running out in the street and listening. Ethel hurried upstairs. Everything was clean and pretty in the young home.

Willy was staggering round the room, after the slowly retreating Lucy, shouting:

"Kill her! Kill her!"

"Mr. Horsepool!" cried Ethel, leaning against the bed, white as the sheets, and trembling. "Whatever are you saying?"

"I tell yer it's 'er fault as th' pain comes on—I tell yer it is! Kill 'er—kill 'er!"

"Kill Mrs. Horsepool!" cried the trembling girl. "Why, you're ever so fond of her, you know you are."

"The peen—I ha'e such a lot o' peen—I want to kill 'er."

He was subsiding. When he sat down his wife collapsed in a chair, weeping noiselessly. The tears ran down Ethel's face. He sat staring out of the window; then the old, hurt look came on his face.

"What 'ave I been sayin'?" he asked, looking piteously at his wife.

"Why!" said Ethel, "you've been carrying on something awful, saying, 'Kill her, kill her!'"

"Have I, Lucy?" he faltered.

"You didn't know what you was saying," said his young wife gently but coldly.

His face puckered up. He bit his lip, then broke into tears, sobbing uncontrollably, with his face to the window.

There was no sound in the room but of three people crying bitterly, breath caught in sobs. Suddenly Lucy put away her tears and went over to him.

"You didn't know what you was sayin', Willy, I know you didn't. I knew you didn't all the time. It doesn't matter, Willy. Only don't do it again."

In a little while, when they were calmer, she went downstairs with Ethel.

"See if anybody is looking in the street," she said.

Ethel went into the parlour and peeped through the curtains.

"Aye!" she said. "You may back your life Lena an' Mrs. Severn'll be out gorping, and that clatfartin' Mrs. Allsop."

"Oh, I hope they haven't heard anything! If it gets about as he's out of his mind, they'll stop his compensation, I know they will."

"They'd never stop his compensation for *that*," protested Ethel.

"Well, they *have* been stopping some——"

"It'll not get about. I s'll tell nobody."

"Oh, but if it does, whatever shall we do? . . ."

GREATER THAN LOVE[1]

By Caradoc Evans

ESTHER knew the sun had risen because she could number the ripening cheeses arrayed on the floor against the wall. She threw back the shawl and sacks that covered her, and descending by the ladder into the kitchen, withdrew the bolt and opened the door.

"Goodness all! Late terrible am I," she said to the young man who entered. "Bring you the cows in a hurry, boy bach."

"Talk you like that, Esther, when the old animals are in the close."

Esther knelt on the hearth and lit the dried furze thereon.

"The buckets are in the milk-house," she went on. "Boy bach, hie you away off and make a start. Come I will as soon as I am ready."

The young man shuffled across the floor into the dairy. He came back with two buckets and a wooden tub, and he placed the tub on the ground and sat on its edge.

"This is the day of the seaside," he said.

Esther turned her face away from the smoke that ascended from the fire.

"Indeed, indeed, now, Sam bach!" she cried, "and you don't say so then!"

"Esther fach, vexful the move of your tongue. Say to me whose cart is carting you?"

"Who speeched that I was going, Sam the son of Ginni?"

"Don't you be laughing, Esther. Tell me now whose cart is carting you."

[1] From "My People." Published by Boni and Liveright, Inc.

"Go I would for sure into Morfa, but, dear me, no one will have me," said Esther.

"What for you cry mischief when there's no mischief to be?" said Sam.

Esther tore off pieces of peat and arranged them lightly on the furze.

"Nice place is Morfa," she observed.

"Girl fach, iss," Sam said. "Nice will be to go out in Twmmi's boat. Speak you that you will spend the day with me."

"How say Catrin! Sober serious! How will Catrin the daughter of Rachel speak if you don't go with her?"

"Mention you Catrin, Esther fach, what for?"

"Is there not loud speakings that you have courted Catrin in bed? Very full is her belly."

"Esther! Esther! Why you make me savage like an old rabbit? Why for play old pranks? Wrench fach, others have been into Catrin. If I die, this is true. Do you believe me now?"

Esther plagued him, saying:

"Bring me small fairings home, Sam bach. Did I not give you a knife when I went to the Fair of the Month of April?"

Sam took out his knife, and sharpened the blade on the leather of his clog.

"Grateful was I for the nice knife," he said. "Did I not stick Old Shemmi's pig with it, Esther fach?"

"Well—well, then?"

"Look you, there's old murmuring that you were taken in mischief with the Schoolin' in Abram's hen loft," said Sam.

Esther rose to her feet and looked upon him. This is the manner of man she saw: a short, bent-shouldered, stunted youth; his face had never been shaved and was covered with tawny hair, and his eyes were sluggish.

Esther laughed.

"Boy bach, unfamiliar you are," she said.

"Mam did say," Sam proceeded, "that I ought not to wed a shiftless female who doesn't take Communion in Capel Sion."

"Your mother Old Ginni is right," said Esther. "Keep you on with Catrin. Ugly is Catrin with bad pimples in her face. But listen you, Sam; a large ladi I will be. I don't want louts like you."

The fire was under way; Esther rolled up to her waist her outer petticoat and she put on an apron.

"Why sit you there like a donkey?" she cried. "Away you and do the milking."

"Esther fach, come you to Morfa," Sam pleaded.

"For sure I'm coming to Morfa," Esther answered. "But not with you. Am I not going to find a love there?"

Then they went forth into the close to milk Old Shemmi's cows, and while they did so each chanted:

"There's a nice cow is Gwen!
Milk she gives indeed!
More milk, little Gwen; more milk!
A cow fach is Gwen,"—

thereby coaxing the animals to give their full yield.

When the milk was separated Esther put on her Sabbath garments and drew her red hair tightly over her forehead, and she took her place in Shemmi's hay-waggon. There were many in the waggon other than Esther and Sam, for the custom is that the farmer takes his servants and those who have helped him without payment in the hayfield freely on a set day to the Sea of Morfa.

Shemmi's waggon reached Morfa before the dew had lifted, and towards the heat of the day (after they had eaten) the people of Manteg gathered together. One said: "Come you down to the brim now, and let us wash our little bodies." The men bathed nakedly: the women had brought spare petticoats with them, and these they wore when they were in the water.

Esther changed her behaviour when she got to Morfa, and she feigned herself above all who had come from Manteg, and while she sat alone in the shadow of a cliff there came to her Hws Morris, a young man who was in training to be a minister. Mishtir Morris was elegant: his clothes were black and he had a white collar around his neck and white

cuffs at the ends of his sleeves, and on his feet he had brown shoes of canvas.

Hws Morris took off from his head his black hat, which was of straw, and said to Esther:

"Sure now, come you from Squire Pryce's household? You are his daughter indeed?"

"Stranger bach," answered Esther, "say you like that, what for?"

"A ladi you seem," said Hws Morris.

Esther was vain, and she did not perceive through the man's artifice.

"Indeed, indeed, then," said Hws Morris, "speak from where you are."

"Did you not say I was Squire Pryce's daughter?" said Esther.

"Ho, ho, old boy wise is Squire Pryce."

Esther turned her eyes upon the bathers. Catrin and another woman were knee-deep in the water; between them, their hands linked, Sam. She heard Bertha Daviss crying from the shore: "Don't you wet it, Sam bach."

Hws Morris placed the tips of his fingers into his ears.

"This," he mourned, "after two thousands years of religion. They need the little Gospel."

"Very respectable to be a preacher it is," said Esther.

"And to be a preacher's mistress," said Hws Morris. "Great is the work the Big Man has called me to do."

A murmuring came from the women on the beach: Sam was struggling in the water. Esther moved a little nearer the sea.

"Where was you going to, then?" asked Hws Morris. "You was not going to bathe with them?"

"Why for no?"

"See you how immodest they are. Girl fach, stay you here. If you need to wash your body, go you round to the backhead of the old stones and take off your clothes and bathe where no eyes will gaze on you."

The murmuring now sounded violent: Lloyd the Schoolin' was swimming towards Sam.

Esther passed beyond the stones, and in a cave she cast

off her clothes and walked into the sea; and having cleansed herself, she dried her skin in the heat of the sun. When she got out from the cave, Hws Morris came up to her.

"Hungry you are," he said to her. "Return you into the cave and eat a little of this cake."

He led her far inside, so far that they could not see anything that was outside. Hws Morris placed his arm over Esther's shoulders, and his white fingers moved lightly over her breast to her thigh. He stole her heart.

Esther heard a voice crying her name.

"Wench fach," said Hws Morris to her, "let none know of our business."

Sam shouted her name against the rocks and over the sea; he cried it in the ears of strange people and at the doors of strange houses. Towards dusk he said to the women who were waiting for Shemmi's hay waggon to start home: "Little females, why is Esther not here?"

Catrin jeered at him: "Filling her belly is Esther."

"But say you've seen Esther fach!" Sam cried.

"Twt, twt!" said Bertha Daviss. "What's the matter with the boy? Take him in your arms, Catrin, and take him to your bed."

"Speak you Esther is not drowned," Sam urged.

"Drowned!" Catrin repeated loudly. "Good if the bad concubine is."

"Evil is the wench," said Bertha Daviss. "Remember how she tried to snare Rhys Shop."

"Fond little women," Sam cried, "say you that Esther fach is not drowned."

"Sam, indeed to goodness," Bertha said to him, "trouble not your mind about a harlot."

"Now, dear me," answered Sam, "foolish is your speech, Bertha. How shall I come home without Esther?"

"There's Catrin, Sam bach. Owe you nothing to Catrin? Is she not in child by you?"

Old Shemmi's hay waggon came into the roadway, and Sam said to the man who drove the horse:

"Male bach nice, don't you begin before Esther comes, and she will be soon. Maybe she's sleeping."

"In the arms of a man," said Catrin.

Sam placed his hands around his mouth and shouted Esther's name.

The people entered the waggon: Sam remained in the road.

"Find you her, Sam bach!" Catrin cried. "Ask the Bad Spirit if he has seen her."

Old Shemmi's mare began the way home.

Sam hastened back to the beach: the tide was coming in, and he walked through the waters, shouting, moaning, and lamenting. At last he beheld Esther, and an awful wrath was kindled within him. As he had loved her, so he now hated her: he hated even more than he had loved her. He had gone on the highway that ends in Llanon. At a little distance in front of him he saw her with a man, and he crept close to them and he heard their voices. He heard Esther saying:

"Don't you send me away now. Let me stay with you."

The man answered: "Shut your throat, you temptress. For why did you flaunt your body before my religious eyes?"

"Did you not make fair speeches to me?" said Esther.

"Terrible is your sin," said the man. "Turn away from me. Little Big Man bach, forgive me for eating of the wench's fruit."

Sam came up to them by stealth.

"Out of your head you must be, boy bach, to make sin with Esther," he said.

Hws Morris looked into Sam's face, and a horrid fear struck him, and he ran: and Sam opened his knife and running after him, caught him and killed him. He had difficulty in drawing away the blade, because it had entered into the man's skull. Then he returned to the place where Esther was, and her he killed also.

BIRTH

By Gilbert Cannan

TWO young men lay in a punt by a wide meadow between Godstow and Eynsham. They were dressed in flannels and their hair was wet from bathing in the river. They were about the same age, anything between twenty-five and thirty-three. One of them wore a happy, pleased expression, the other seemed much older, more thoughtful and preoccupied. They were having tea.

Martin raised his cup to his lips, put it down again, and a serious expression came across his happy face.

"Life is so grey," he said.

His friend looked up from lighting his pipe, and his expression of preternatural gravity changed to a look almost quizzical.

"For you?" he said.

"No, Ray. I mean for all the other poor devils."

He turned lazily over on his side, and looked out over the edge of the punt, reached out his hand and plucked a water-fly from the surface of the water where it was skimming in circles.

"Oh! poor beast! I've broken its wing! . . . that's what I mean. . . . That's how so many of them go through life, with their wings broken . . . right from the very beginning. What chance do they have?"

"They're alive."

"Are they? You don't see what I see."

"I should have more sympathy with them than you, if I did."

"What do you mean? D'you think I don't pity them? That's what I meant when I said 'Life is so grey!'"

"And that's what I meant when I said you don't sympathise with them."

"Please explain."

"I don't think you'd understand."

"I admit I haven't your perception or your intellect, or I should be you instead of being what I am."

"Did you or did you not dive into the water just now?"

"I did."

"And did you or did you not ride over the meadow bare-backed with that friendly horse?"

"I did."

"And after that you can say that life is grey?"

"Well—it is."

"You're incorrigible."

"My dear man, in my work in hospital I come across such hopeless misery. I tell you, you have no idea. You can't imagine . . ."

"I can imagine anything."

"It is you who are arrogant."

"I said you were unsympathetic. You know much, but you understand nothing at all, and, therefore, you have no business to be a doctor."

"Indeed? I can be what I choose."

"There are some things which should not be done except by the people who understand—doctoring is one of them."

"I don't know what you mean."

"What I say—You say 'Life is so grey.' That means that though in your work you come in contact, as you say, with hopeless, ghastly misery, it has taught you nothing. I could tell you a great deal, but it wouldn't be any use, simply because you would not understand . . ."

Braithwaite's pipe went out. He stopped to clean it with a reed which he plucked with a lazy hand.

"Try . . ."

"Women understand more often than men, by sheer instinct and perception. That is why in the under classes the women are so often superior to the men, even for bare mechanical purposes. . . . Women know the joy that lies behind great misery. . . . They know that the force of

the world, or the life force, or whatever you like to call it, is a thing which laughs and cries at the same time—and—and I tell you, that so far as a man is sufficiently and truly himself to laugh and cry at the same time, so far is he a master of life, and mastery of life is the true aim and end of all human endeavour . . ."

"I don't see what you mean; but go on."

"The perfect man, the master of life, is he in whom thought and instinct are most absolutely balanced, but there is no perfect man—which is just as well, for he would die at once from sheer acceptance of things. But the balance is not in one man, never can be—it was in the legendary Christ, I suppose—but in all men, in the whole world. In spite of all the waste, and friction, hideous distortion and terror, it is there; if it weren't there, the world would burst. Though a man may be mad, the world is sane. Now do you see what I mean?"

"No."

"You look puzzled, and I believe that I could make you see. The germ of understanding is in all of us. . . . Well, do you still say that 'Life is so grey'?"

"Yes. . . . You simply don't know what I know. You theorise about life and work yourself into an exalted state of optimism. Come with me some night and I'll make you see."

"I think I shall make *you* see."

"You will come?"

"Very well. When?"

"Next Tuesday?"

"Dine with me. Or call for me at the hospital and we'll go down. I'm on maternity cases."

"Maternity! By God! You shall see."

Braithwaite rose, took the punt pole and pushed out from the bank. His friend, Martin, restored the water-fly with its broken wing to its natural element, waved an elaborate farewell to the friendly horse with whom he had galloped over the golden meadow, and they returned up-stream to Eynsham, and thence back to London . . .

On the following Tuesday Braithwaite called for Martin

at the hospital. Martin's pleasant face wore the worried expression which he considered professional, and he was rather cross and officious, which he also considered professional. Braithwaite was moody and silent. He had been among the very poor before, but always alone and as a "sympathetic," as he was pleased to call himself, and at the moment he was bitterly resenting his friend's hard and purely professional attitude of mind.

Martin, a little hurt by his silence, turned to him and said: "Anything wrong?"

"No. I was thinking."

"You always are."

"I was thinking how perfectly intolerable the practice of your profession would be to you, if you were me."

They walked swiftly through well-lighted streets where there were crowds of men and women, girls and young men, strangely clad, many of them; and men with odd Eastern faces; Semites and Slavs, contrasting vividly in their alertness and swift change of expression with the slower, heavier, narrow astuteness of the Cockney type. The life and movement in the streets produced excitement in Braithwaite and he returned the smile which a prostitute cast at him. Martin saw it, and misunderstood.

They turned out of the stream into a narrow lane, where slatternly women were sitting gossiping on the doorsteps and men in varying states of intoxication were reeling home. Of the drunken men the majority were English, none were Jews. At a corner of the lane was a little public house. Two men were standing in the gutter. One played a whistle and the other a guitar. They were low Italians. On the shoulder of one of them sat a small monkey, alert and bright, combing its black little fingers through its master's greasy hair. Braithwaite stopped to caress it. Martin hurried him along. They turned the corner past the public house into another lane, lower, narrower, more squalid than the first. On the doorsteps sat women more slatternly than the others, more heavy, less interested. In the gutter among orange-peel, scraps of paper, and mud, lay a man. As they passed him a little woman rushed out of a house, pounced on him,

kicked him, beat him, screamed at him, and finally felt in his pockets, and finding no money, left him.

Martin stopped a mean, mealy-faced little man and asked him for the house of such and such a one.

"That's 'im," said the mealy-faced man, pointing to the man in the gutter.

"That's the father," said Martin to Braithwaite. "Life at its rottenest."

"Life—still, it is life."

They came to the door of a house; a mean door, a battered, blistered door, that bore the marks of heavily shod feet. There was neither bell nor knocker. Martin kicked. There was no sign of life in the house. Martin kicked again and they waited.

"How about your theories now?"

"Wait."

"There is nothing to hope for. Poor devils . . . what you will see inside! . . ."

The door was opened by a woman stark naked except for a dirty pink petticoat thrown hastily over her shoulders. Braithwaite took off his hat to her politely. She swore at him cheerfully. Martin passed in and the woman asked them to go upstairs.

"She's bad," she said. "Mind the stairs, there's a 'ole in them. Wait while I get a light."

She disappeared into the darkness, to return in a moment holding a tallow candle in her hand, over her head, so that the grease dripped down every now and then on to her hair. By the light of the candle they could see the stairs rising steeply in front of them within a few feet of the door. The banisters were gone and one or two stairs were broken. There were great holes in the plaster of the wall, and part of the ceiling of the passage bulged ominously. There was a vile thickness in the air and a smell of garlic from the ground floor room, from the door of which peered a thick-nosed Jew. They ascended the stairs, the woman first, Martin next, and then Braithwaite, who kept wondering with amusement why the woman preferred not to wash her feet and legs. At the top of the stairs they turned sharp to the

left and entered a room, lit only by moonbeams struggling through the little window, the panes of which were broken, stuffed with rags, plastered, where cracked, with paper, or grimily opaque. There were two beds in the room. In one lay a man snoring and at the foot two children asleep. It was a crazy iron bedstead and the bedclothes were stale and frowsy. The woman jabbed with her thumb in the direction of the opposite corner of the room, threw off her petticoat, and prepared to slide into bed. She stopped, however, with her knee on the edge of the mattress:

"Theer ain't nothin' I c'n dew?"

"You can help," said Martin. From the other corner of the room there came moaning, moaning.

"Is there any brandy in the house?" said Martin.

"I got some this arternoon thinkin' it might be wanted. I 'ad to 'ide it."

She rummaged under the mattress of the bed and produced a flat bottle of coarse green glass, filled with brown liquor.

"She's not strong. . . . An' the last time nearly killed 'er, she told me. She wasn't livin' 'ere then."

All the time she was dressing, getting into her clothes. Braithwaite sat on the table, the chairs all looked too crazy and perilous.

The woman in travail moaned, and moaned, and occasionally cried in fear. She opened her eyelids and gazed with heavy fevered eyes at Martin. Braithwaite moved and stood by her side. She rolled her head on the hard dirty pillow and tears streamed down her cheeks, but through her tears she smiled at him, and reached out her thin arm. He understood, and held out his hand which she clutched tightly. He sat there holding her hand, and he looked up at Martin, but quickly away again, for there was nothing but disinterest in his eyes.

Presently the tears of the woman in travail ceased to flow, as the pain grew in her, and her breathing came fast and fast, and sanity left her eyes; they stared hard and glittering, senseless and yet questioning, in Braithwaite's direction, and tightly she held his hand. Through this contact he

could feel the warm life in her, the outgoing and the struggle. In all his veins his blood boiled, and he could feel a sort of faint echo in himself of her agony. Tightly she held his hand.

Martin and the woman were busy fetching water, towels, warm clothes, and the three of them were there, waiting . . . waiting. In the other bed the man stirred, turned in his sleep, cursed tranquilly in a gentle dreamy voice, and kicked one of the children at the foot of the bed. It cried out, then slept, and silence came again.

So they waited, and the woman moaned, twisted and moaned, and a feeling surged in Braithwaite's body, so that the veins in his temples swelled, and he choked. The woman gathered strength, all her forces, and all the while she clutched his hand tighter and tighter. . . . Agony grew. . . . Unbearable. Braithwaite's eyes started from his head; he found his tongue between his teeth and bit it. . . . He saw Martin bend swiftly over the woman and lay something white over her mouth. . . . Then his head sank on his breast, he heard a buzzing, whispering voices,—and he knew no more. . . .

Far, far away, remote, distant, hazy, he heard a great glad cry greeting the world. . . . Such a cry——

When he came to himself he found Martin pouring brandy down his throat, and the woman still holding his hand, and he was glad—oh! glad . . .

On a chair near the bed the other woman was holding a white bundle in her arms, crooning over it, rocking to and fro, and her eyes shone. . . .

He looked up into Martin's face and saw that there were tears in his eyes.

They waited until the mother was restored to consciousness. Braithwaite stooped and kissed her on the forehead. She smiled tenderly at him, with a tenderness the greater for her large weariness. For a moment he took the child in his arms, then laid it by her side so that its head lay on her arm. Again she smiled at him.

He laid two pieces of gold on the mantelpiece and together they went, he and Martin, down the crazy stairs, out

into the squalid street, past the father who lay there still in the gutter . . .

They spoke no word, not even when they separated, to bid each other "Good-night."



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CANNAN, GILBERT.

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DOWSON, ERNEST.

Born at Lea in Kent, 1867. Educated at Queen's College, Oxford. He wrote much poetry between 1889 and 1899, mostly in France, where he spent much of his life. He was the author of a dramatic phantasy in verse entitled "The Pierrot of the Minute," in 1897. He also translated many French and other works of literary value. He was

a member of the famous Rhymers' Club of England. Died of phthisis Feb. 21, 1900.

Author of "Souvenirs of an Egoist," 1888. "The Cult of the Child," 1889. "The Diary of a Successful Man," 1890. "The Story of a Violin," 1891. "The Statute of Limitations," 1893. "A Comedy of Masks," 1893. "Apple Blossom in Brittany," 1894. *"Dilemmas," 1895. "The Eyes of Pride," 1896. "Countess Marie of the Angels," 1896. "The Dying of Francis Donne," 1896. "Adrian Rome" (with Arthur Moore), 1899.

EGERTON, GEORGE (Mrs. GOLDING BRIGHT) (MARY CHAVELITA).

Born at Melbourne, Australia, in camp at Tauranga during Maori War; went in sailing vessel to Valparaiso and arrived during bombardment; thence to Wales and Ireland; since worked in America and London; been in most countries in Europe. Educated privately. Intended for an artist, but family affairs prevented course of study as intended; writing came as an afterthought.

Author of "Keynotes," 1893. "Discords," 1894. "Young Ofeg's Ditties," 1895. "Symphonies," 1897. "Fantasias," 1898. "The Wheel of God," 1898. "Rosa Amorosa," 1901. "Flies in Amber," 1905. "His Wife's Family" (Play), 1908. "The Backsliders" (Play), 1910. "The Rafale" (Adaptation), 1911. "The Daughter of Heaven" (Adaptation), 1912. "The Attack" (Adaptation), 1912. "Wild Thyme, Flers et Caillavet" (Adaptation), 1914.

EVANS, CARADOC.

Novelist and journalist. Born Pantycroy, Llandyssul, Wales. Educated Rhydlewis Board School, Cardiganshire; Working Man's College, London. Apprenticed to a Carmarthen draper at thirteen and employed for about twelve years at various London and provincial drapery shops; later

joined editorial staffs of Everybody's Weekly, Harmsworth's History of the World, etc.

Author of *"My People," 1915. *"Capel Sion," 1916. *"My Neighbours," 1918.

HARDY, THOMAS.

Born in Dorsetshire, June 2, 1840. Educated at local schools and privately. Practised architecture.

Author of novels, short stories, poems and plays: "Desperate Remedies," 1871. "Under the Greenwood Tree," 1872. "A Pair of Blue Eyes," 1873. "Far From the Madding Crowd," 1874. "Hand of Ethelberta," 1876. "Return of the Native," 1878. "Trumpet-Major," 1879. "Laodicean," 1881. "Two on a Tower," 1882. "Mayor of Casterbridge," 1884. "Woodlanders," 1886. *"Wessex Tales," 1888. *"A Group of Noble Dames," 1891. "Tess of the D'Urbervilles," 1891. *"Life's Little Ironies," 1894. "Jude the Obscure," 1895. "Well-Beloved," 1897. "Wessex Poems," 1898. "Poems of the Past and the Present," 1901. "Dynasts," 1903-1908. "Time's Laughing-Stocks," 1909. *"A Changed Man," 1913. "Satires of Circumstance," 1914. "Selected Poems," 1916. "Moments of Vision," 1918.

HEWLETT, MAURICE (HENRY).

Born Jan. 22, 1861. Educated at London International College, Spring Grove, Islesworth. Practised law, and has occupied government civil service position.

Author of *"Earthwork Out of Tuscany," 1895. "Masque of Dead Florentines," 1895. "Songs and Meditations," 1897. "Forest Lovers," 1898. "Pan and the Young Shepherd," 1898. *"Little Novels of Italy," 1899. "Richard Yea-and-Nay," 1900. *"New Canterbury Tales," 1901. "Queen's Quair," 1904. "Road in Tuscany," 1904. *"Fond Adventures," 1905. "Fool Errant," 1905. "Stooping Lady," 1907. "Half-way House," 1908. "Open Country," 1909. "Artemision," 1909. "Rest Harrow," 1910. "Brazenhead the

Great," 1911. "Agonists," 1911. "Song of Renny," 1911. "Mrs. Lancelot," 1912. "Helen Redeemed," 1913. "Lore of Proserpine," 1913. "Bendish," 1913. "Lover's Tale," 1915. "Little Iliad," 1916. "Frey and His Wife," 1916. "Gai Saber," 1916. "Song of the Plow," 1916. "Thorgils," 1917.

HUDSON, W. H.

An Englishman born in South America, 1862; grew up on a big ranch. He is shy and dislikes to give information about himself. When asked for biographical data he says: "All the interesting part of my life ended when I ceased to be a boy, and my autobiography ends at fifteen." He is a naturalist with ornithology his chief bent. Living in England since the early eighties of last century.

Author of "The Purple Land," 1885. "Argentine Ornithology" (with P. L. Sclater), 1889. "Naturalist in La Plata," 1892. "Birds in a Village," 1893. "Idle Days in Patagonia," 1893. "British Birds," 1895. "Birds in London," 1899. "Nature in Downland," 1900. "Birds and Man," 1901. *"El Ombu," 1902. "Hampshire Days," 1903. "Green Mansions," 1904. "Crystal Age," 1906. "Lands End," 1908. "Afoot in England," 1909. "Shepherd's Life," 1910. "Adventures Among Birds," 1913. *"Tales of the Pampas," 1916. "A Little Boy Lost," 1918. "Far Away and Long Ago," 1918.

KIPLING, RUDYARD

Born at Bombay, India, Dec. 30, 1865. Educated at United Service College, Westward Ho, North Devon. Assistant editor, *Civil and Military Gazette and Pioneer* (India), 1882-89. Has travelled widely over the world.

Author of "Departmental Ditties," 1886. *"Plain Tales from the Hills," 1887. *"Soldiers Three," 1888. *"In Black and White," 1888. *"Story of the Gadsbys," 1888. *"Under the Deodars," 1889. *"Phantom Rickshaw," 1889. *"Wee Willie Winkie," 1889. *"Life's Handicap,"

1890. *"Light That Failed," 1891. "Barrack-Room Ballads," 1892. *"Many Inventions," 1893. *"Jungle Book," 1894. *"Second Jungle Book," 1895. "Seven Seas," 1896. "Captains Courageous," 1897. *"Day's Work," 1898. *"Stalky and Co.," 1899. "From Sea to Sea," 1899. "Kim," 1901. *"Just So Stories," 1902. "Five Nations," 1903. *"Traffics and Discoveries," 1904. *"Puck of Pook's Hill," 1906. *"Actions and Reactions," 1909. *"Rewards and Fairies," 1910. "History of England" (with C. R. L. Fletcher), 1911. "Songs from Books," 1913. "Harbour Watch," 1913. "New Armies in Training," 1914. "France at War," 1915. "Fringes of the Fleet," 1915. "Sea Warfare," 1916. *"A Diversity of Creatures," 1917. "Eyes of Asia," 1918. "Gethsemane," 1919.

LAWRENCE, DAVID HERBERT

Born 1885.

Author of "White Peacock," 1911. "Trespasser," 1912. "Sons and Lovers," 1913. "Love Poems, and Others," 1913. *"Prussian Officer," 1914. "Widowing of Mrs. Holroyd," 1914. "Rainbow," 1915. "Twilight in Italy," 1916. "Amores," 1916. "Look! We Have Come Through," 1917.

"MACLEOD, FIONA," *See* SHARP, WILLIAM

MIDDLETON, RICHARD

Born 1882. Died 1911.

Author of "Day Before Yesterday," 1912. "Ghost Ship," 1912. "Poems and Songs" (First and Second Series), 1912. "Monologues," 1913.

NEVINSON, HENRY WOODD.

Born in 1852. Educated at Shrewsbury School, Christ Church, Oxford. Correspondent of the *Daily Chronicle* during Greek and Turkish War, 1897; in Crete, 1897; in

Spain, 1898; and in Natal and Transvaal during the Boer War. Was in Berlin for the *Daily News* at outbreak of war, August, 1914; afterwards in Northern France. With British army at Salonika and Egypt, 1916.

Author of "Neighbors of Ours," 1895. "In the Valley of Tophet," 1896. "The Thirty Days' War," 1898. "Ladysmith," 1900. "The Plea of Pan," 1901. "Between the Acts," 1903. Chapters on France in Mr. Hallam Murray's "On the Old Road," 1904. "Books and Personalities," 1905. "A Modern Slavery," 1906. "The Dawn in Russia," 1906. Series of Articles on the Caucasus in "Harper's Monthly," 1907. "The New Spirit in India," 1908. "Essays in Freedom," 1912. "Essays in Rebellion," 1913.

PERTWEE, ROLAND.

A young Englishman who has contributed many short stories to American and English magazines.

Author of *"The Transactions of Lord Louis Lewis," 1918. "The Old Cord," 1918.

QUILLER-COUCH, SIR ARTHUR THOMAS.

Born in Cornwall, Nov. 21, 1863. Educated at Newton Abbot College, Clifton College, and Oxford. Lecturer at Trinity College, Oxford, 1886-87. Engaged in editorial work 1887-1899. Professor of English Literature at Cambridge University since 1912.

Author of "Dead Man's Rock," 1887. "Troy Town," 1888. "Splendid Spur," 1889. *"Noughts and Crosses, 1891. "Blue Pavilions," 1891. *"I Saw Three Ships," 1892. "Warwickshire Avon," 1892. *"Delectable Duchy," 1893. "Green Bays," 1893. *"Wandering Heath," 1895. "Golden Pomp," 1895. "Ia," 1896. "Adventures in Criticism," 1896. "Poems and Ballads," 1896. "St. Ives," (with R. L. Stevenson) 1897. "Ship of Stars," 1899. *"Old Fires and Profitable Ghosts," 1900. "Oxford Book of English Verse," 1900. *"Laird's Luck," 1901. "Westcotes," 1902. *"White Wolf," 1902. "Adventures of Harry Revel,"

1903. "Hetty Wesley," 1903. *"Two Sides of the Face," 1903. "Fort Amity," 1904. "Shining Ferry," 1905. *"Shakespeare's Christmas," 1905. "From a Cornish Window," 1906. "Sir John Constantine," 1906. "Poison Island," 1907. "Merry Garden," 1907. "Major Vigoureux," 1907. "True Tilda," 1909. "Lady Good-for-Nothing," 1910. *"Corporal Sam," 1910. "Oxford Book of Ballads," 1910. "Brother Copas," 1911. "Oxford Book of Victorian Verse," 1912. "Hocken and Hunken," 1912. "Vigil of Venus," 1912. *"News from the Duchy," 1915. "Nicky-Nan, Reservist," 1915. "On the Art of Writing," 1916. "Memoir of Arthur John Butler," 1917. *"Mortallone and Aunt Trinidad," 1917. "Foe-Farrell," 1918. "Shakespeare's Workmanship," 1918. "Studies in Literature," 1918.

SHARP, WILLIAM ("Fiona Macleod.")

Born 1856. Died 1905.

Principal works under pseudonym of "Fiona Macleod": "Pharais," 1894. "The Mountain Lovers," 1895. *"The Sin-Eater," 1895. *"The Washer of the Ford," 1896. "Green Fire," 1896. "From the Hills of Dreams," 1896. *"Laughter of Peterkin," 1897. *"The Dominion of Dreams," 1899. "The Divine Adventure," 1900. "The Immortal Hour," 1900. "Drostan and Iseult," 1902. *"The Winged Destiny," 1904. "Through the Ivory Gate," "Where the Forest Murmurs," 1906.

STEVENSON, ROBERT LOUIS (Balfour).

Born 1850. Educated at Edinburgh University. Studied engineering and law. Literary career began in 1876. His delicate health compelled him to travel widely abroad. He settled in Samoa in 1889, where he resided until his death in 1894.

Principal works: "An Island Voyage," 1878. "Deacon Brodie," 1878. "Travels With a Donkey," 1879. "Virginibus Puerisque," 1881. "Familiar Studies of Men and Books," 1882. "Treasure Island," 1882. *"New Arabian

Nights," 1882. "Black Arrow," 1883. "Bean Austin" (with W. E. Henley), 1884. "Macaire" (with W. E. Henley), 1884. "Admiral Guinea" (with W. E. Henley), 1885. "Child's Garden of Verses," 1885. "Prince Otto," 1885. *"More New Arabian Nights," 1885. "Kidnapped," 1886. "Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde," 1886. "Memories and Portraits," 1887. "Underwood," 1887. "Wrong Box" (with Lloyd Osbourne), 1888. "Master of Ballantrae," 1889. "David Balfour," 1893. *"Island Nights' Entertainments," 1893. "Ebb-Tide" (with Lloyd Osbourne), 1893. "Vailima Letters," 1893-1894. "St. Ives" (with A. T. Quiller-Couch), 1895. "Weir of Hermiston," 1897.

TREVENA, JOHN (ERNEST G. HENTRAM).

Born in 1878. Lives a very secluded existence, leaving Dartmoor not more than two or three weeks during the year.

Author of "A Pixy in Petticoats," 1906. "Arminal of the West," 1907. "Furze the Cruel," 1907. "Heather," 1908. "The Dartmoor House that Jack Built," 1909. "Granite," 1909. *"Written in the Rain," 1910. "Bracken," 1910. "The Reign of the Saints," 1911. "Wintering Hay," 1912. "Sleeping Waters," 1913. "Adventures Among Wild Flowers," 1914. "Moyle Church Town," 1915. "The Captain's Furniture," 1916. "A Drake by George!" 1916.

WALPOLE, HUGH SEYMOUR.

Born in 1884. Educated at King's College, Canterbury, and Cambridge University. Served with Russian Red Cross, 1914-1916.

Author of "Wooden Horse," 1909. "Maradick at Forty," 1910. "Mr. Perrin and Mr. Traill," 1911. "Prelude to Adventure," 1912. "Fortitude," 1913. "Duchess of Wrexe," 1914. "Golden Scarecrow," 1915. "Dark Forest," 1916. "Joseph Conrad," 1916. "Green Mirror," 1918.

WATSON, E. L. GRANT.

Author of "Where Bonds Are Loosed," 1914. "Mainland," 1917.

WEDMORE, SIR FREDERICK.

Born at Richmond Hill, Clifton, July 9, 1844. Educated at Weston-Super-Mare, Lausanne and Paris. Chiefly known as a literary and art critic.

Author of "Studies in English Art," 1876. *"Pastorals of France," 1877. "Four Masters of Etching," 1883. "Méryon," 1889. "Life of Balzac," 1890. *"Renunciations," 1893. *"English Episodes," 1895. "Etching in England," 1895. "Fine Prints," 1896. *"Orgeas and Miradon," 1896. "On Books and Art," 1899. "The Collapse of the Penitent," 1900. *"To Nancy," 1903. "Whistler and Others," 1904. "Some of the Moderns," 1909. "Etchings," 1911. "Memories," 1912. "Painters and Painting," 1913. "Brenda Walks On," 1916.

WELLS, HERBERT GEORGE.

Born at Bromley, Kent, Sept. 21, 1866. Educated at private school, Milhurst Grammar School, and Royal College of Science.

Author of "Select Conversations With an Uncle," 1895. *"Time Machine," 1895. *"Stolen Bacillus," 1895. "Wonderful Visit," 1895. "Island of Doctor Moreau," 1896. "Wheels of Chance," 1896. *"Plattner Story," 1897. "Certain Personal Matters," 1897. "Invisible Man," 1897. "War of the Worlds," 1898. "When the Sleeper Wakes," 1899. *"Tales of Space and Time," 1899. "Love and Mr. Lewisham," 1900. "First Men in the Moon," 1901. "Anticipations," 1901. "Discovery of the Future," 1902. "Sea Lady," 1902. "Mankind in the Making," 1903. *"Twelve Stories and a Dream," 1903. "Food of the Gods," 1904.

"A Modern Utopia," 1905. "Kipps," 1905. "In the Days of the Comet," 1906. "Future in America," 1906. "This Misery of Boots," 1907. "New Worlds for Old," 1908. "First and Last Things," 1908. "War in the Air," 1908. "Tono Bungay," 1909. "Ann Veronica," 1909. "History of Mr. Polly," 1910. "New Machiavelli," 1911. "Floor Games for Children," 1911. "Marriage," 1912. "Little Wars," 1913. *"Country of the Blind," 1913. "Passionate Friends," 1913. "Wife of Sir Isaac Harmon," 1914. "An Englishman Looks at the World," 1914. "World Set Free," 1914. "War That Will End War," 1914. "Peace of the World," 1915. "Boon," 1915. "Bealby," 1915. "Research Magnificent," 1915. "What Is Coming?" 1916. "Mr. Britling Sees It Through," 1916. "Elements of Reconstruction," 1916. "War and the Future," 1917. "God, the Invisible King," 1917. "Soul of a Bishop," 1917. "Joan and Peter," 1918.

"WILDE, OSCAR" (Fingal O'Flahertie Wills).

Born in Dublin, October 16, 1854. Travelled widely in Europe in his youth. Graduated from Oxford, 1877. Went to London and became active in literary circles. Visited America in 1882 on a lecture tour. Returned to Europe and settled in Paris. Married in 1884, after his return to England. Engaged in literary work until 1895, when he was sentenced to two years' imprisonment. Left England upon his release, and died in penury at Paris, November 30, 1900.

Principal works: "Poems," 1881. *"The Happy Prince," 1888. *"Lord Arthur Savile's Crime," 1891. "The Soul of Man Under Socialism," 1891. "Picture of Dorian Gray," 1891. "Intentions," 1891. *"House of Pomegranates," 1891. "Lady Windermere's Fan," 1892. "A Woman of No Importance," 1893. "Salome," 1893. "Ideal Husband," 1895. "Importance of Being Earnest," 1895. "Ballad of Reading Gaol," 1898. "De Profundis," 1905. "Duchess of Padua," 1891.





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